

몽연 현대 판타지 소설

라이프 미션



KW

Life Mission

– 라이프 미션 –

- Volume 1 -

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- STORY -

Life Mission – a game that has become reality.

What started out as a virtual reality game, after being suspended out of the blue, has turned into a reality. The perks are amazing and real – where points can be used to buy precious metals and cures for terminal illnesses. But so are the consequences. Death in this new reality game... is just as real.

Our MC was one of the best players of the virtual reality game. But will he be able to become the best in this new version?

Who will die and who will survive?

Resident Evil-esque later in the story

Chapter 1

Wiing.

A cold wind swept through a city in ruins. Even the simple wind was dreary and caused a hair-raising atmosphere. Desolation.

He could not detect a breath of life. Most likely it was just that he could not tell if there really was no life, or if it was hiding somewhere. Whatever it was, it was not visible to the naked eye.

This was a dangerous place.

No.

Dangerous did not cut it.

Why?

It was home to the Level 9 Mutant Shapiollin faction that ruled the whole of North America. In other words, it could be called the nest of the Evil Queen.

Crumble.

Hard stone crumbled like crackers as he crushed them in his hands.

He was young. He looked as though he would be in his early to mid twenties at most. He was known for his dark red armor and the long sword he wore at his waist.

Kiki!

An eerie laugh rang out. Were they making themselves known now because a person appeared? Or did his human flesh stir up their hunger so much that they let it slip?

Then, another hair-raising sound rang throughout the silent city and mutants that were difficult to look at appeared.

Each of them was beyond Level 5, and there were some Level 6s among them.

They were all strong.

However, they were still nothing more than the Queen's servants.

"Whew! It'd be upsetting if I didn't get at least this much of a welcoming party. I wandered for years looking for the Shapiollin. But you guys wouldn't know that, would you?"

Cha Jun Sung talked to the mutants, but there was no response.

Conversation was usually possible for these mutants starting from Level 7. There were some exceptions though.

It depended on what it evolved from first. What was certain was that those who could speak were definitely more powerful.

"I was bored to pieces. Really."

He had finally arrived here at this final battle stage after fighting against all types of monsters and tremor-inducing suffering.

Kiha!

The mutants who had obviously not been listening to a single word approached Cha Jun Sung.

Though they did not possess language, they had a high level of cunning and signs of caution were clear. But they did not hesitate. They seemed to be trusting their numerical advantage.

"There's no time to waste on the little ones. It's hard to deal with even one of the Shapiollin. I'll hurry and take you guys to your graves."

Snap!

Cha Jun Sung snapped his fingers. At that moment, his equipment, Overload, spurred a massive shootout.

Kwang kwang kwang kwang!

Countless skyscrapers collapsed from Overload's attack.

Explosions ensued all around. It amplified the destructiveness by compressing gunpowder. There was even the illusion that the space had become contorted from all the attacks.

Keuk!!

However, since their numbers were many and most were of high enough levels, there were a lot who escaped the indiscriminate firing.

This had been anticipated.

[Code input. Goal annihilation.] [Program execution. 1522 objects! Metal cyborg closing in! Distance between enemy under 0.2%, damage probability 99.8%! Body unite!]

As the mode was phoned in, Overload stopped the shooting. He tossed his firearms and pulled out his secondary arms.

The driving force of the booster surged Overload's gas. Cha Jun Sung sped up in the blink of an eye and collided with the mutants.

The secondary arms cut the mutants' bones and flesh. Easy.

Cha Jun Sung casually strolled past the battlefield. None of the mutants that tried to stop him were able to get past Overload and collapsed.

After walking for a while, he stopped at a place that had once been packed with expensive buildings, but was now the center of rubble, lost in the aftermath of destruction.

At the peak, there was a naked woman looking down at Cha Jun Sung atop a giant creature.

She detected he was coming and had been waiting for him in a quiet place.

The Evil Queen.

Evil Queen Shapiollin.

She was one of the 6 disasters, infected by the A virus, called the human despair, and was in the final stage of evolution. She was Cha Jun Sung's objective.

"Evil Queen Shapiollin."

"Well. You're more handsome than I thought you'd be. I was going to kill you, but I guess I'll have to keep you alive."

Lap.

The Shapiollin's disgusting tongue licked every corner of his body. There was an imbalance in a snake-like tongue coming from a beautiful woman.

She had an appetite for human men, so if she found a man that was okay, she would not kill him and keep him to play with.

"Your intentions are different from mine."

"What are your intentions?"

"To kill the wrinkly old mutant in front of me."

In human years the Shapiollin was almost 200 years old. Even if she was beautiful, calling her an old woman was appropriate.

"Is that so? Then I guess I'll have to change mine. I won't kill you, but I'll put you in so much pain you'll beg for death."

Kwajijjik.

The Shapiollin's body inflated like a balloon and a horrible aura was ejected. She was breaking out of her human image and going back to her main body.

Each of the six disasters had their own title. This title was created from one part character and another part physical appearance. She was called the Evil Queen because of her depraved nature and the appearance of a queen that she took on.

"So this is the Queen."

Chapter 2

She looked like a bizarre but regal and refined woman wearing a billowy navy blue dress. The tentacles configuring her dress looked like sharp swords.

The Shapiollin's shape changed at will. Of the six disasters, she was considered to have the greatest cutting force and to be the best at avoiding attacks.

"Are you the one who killed three of my children?"

"I am."

The Shapiollin opened its mouth in its true state. Her voice now clanged as if metal was scratching on metal. It was an unpleasant voice that could easily cut a man's confidence.

"I did it as practice before facing the real one. They were strong. But not strong enough."

While Cha Jun Sung was on his journey to the Shapiollin, he had killed three mutants at Level 8 born from her womb. He had done so measure up his own level as a comparison. To see if he would be able to handle the Level 9 mutant, if you will.

"Do you know how much I prayed to the skull so that I could birth those children?"

"You talk too much. It's fine to have a lot of children, but we don't need more mutants. Starting next year, I'm going to fix North America."

Woowoong!

Cha Jun Sung's armor made the sound of a loud engine. The machinery flowing at units of nanometers were responding to their owner's call.

This product of early science was what made it possible for the weak human body to fight against powerful mutants.

Though there were varying shooting capabilities, a human would die under the

pressure of the shot unless he had gone through some body modifications.

After 10 body modifications, Cha Jun Sung had created a body that was hundreds of times beyond the average person's. On top of that, since he had the best battle shooting ability, he was appropriately called a biological weapon with the ability to destroy a country.

-[Battle core 60% deployed!]

-[Over-booster! 150 meters to the target. 0.7 seconds before impact.]

Bam!

A great force came down on the earth. Cracks like spiderwebs formed in the concrete. It had not been able to put up against the violent force.

The Shapiollin moved as it used the tentacles of her dress to escape hundreds of shards. She had amazing vision and was able to avoid the onslaught.

Tatatatat!

Cha Jun Sung also avoided the shower with ease. Tentacles swept as he passed. Buildings were cut to strips.

Kwakwakwakwa!

As spaces to hide were reduced, he stepped on the side of a skyscraper and sprinted.

He had deceived the laws of gravity, but he was not able to approach her. She was spinning in the same spot.

“Ha! Look at you! You won't be able to kill me, much less injure me like that.”

“You don't need to egg me on, I'm going to try it anyway.”

Bang!

Cha Jun Sung who had only been escaping the tentacles took on the offensive and cut one approaching him.

The quick trajectory of his sword ripped the Shapiollin's tentacle. It only looked like he had done it once, but he had made dozens of motions.

Papat!

He advanced as he avoided and blocked the others. Once he brandished his sword, there was nothing to stop him.

'Since its stamina is its weak spot, I need to wound her so she allocates her strength to recovering. She'll slowly dry out and die.'

Compared to other disasters, the Shapiollin were weak in stamina.

She was most likely a level 9 mutant. Her attacks only confirmed his suspicions.

Zapzapzapzap!

It was intense. The two collided at extreme speeds. The only difference was that Cha Jun Sung focused on defense while the Shapiollin focused on the offense.

"Seems I'm almost there."

"Where?"

Pat!

Cha Jun Sung got through the intense standoff and approached the Shapiollin.

He leapt into the air. Though he could not fly, he was able to use the battle shoot to move freely in the air.

"I shall rip you apart."

-[Battle core 80% deployed.]

-[Cut it off.]

Cha Jun Sung brought down the swords he had been holding with both hands. The heavy wind pressure and a stem of light created the illusion that the world had split.

The Shapiollin opened her red eyes widely. It was dangerous. If she were to be hit with that, she would be split in half. It hurt her pride, but she had to avoid it.

Tuang!

The tentacle that had been compressed like a spring pushed her off in the direction she wanted.

Sukuk!

Kwung!

A thin gold thread was drawn in the air. The Shapiollin avoided it, but the Level 7 mutant protecting her received it full on.

Fitting its large size, an enormous amount of its blood and guts covered the surrounding buildings. Long ago, hundreds of people had to unite against the strength of a mutant of that caliber, but it was now possible for a strong modified human to overtake it alone.

"I admit that could have hurt me a bit, but all I have to do is avoid getting hit."

"I've banked everything on catching you. I can swing this hundreds of times. It's only a matter of time, Queen."

If he lost, all of his suffering thus far would have been in vain. It would be okay if he lost his arms and legs if he could just end the Shapiollin's life.

Shiik.

Cha Jun Sung bared his teeth and showed his resolution. His hands shook as he repeated a series of the attack he had just demonstrated.

It was a skill that could only be used after reaching more than 80% of the battle core.

"Why do you think I chose you of the six disasters?"

"What does that mean?"

"Your character fits mine well."

-[Battle core 100% deployed.]

-[Duplication of the over-booster gives you a retention time of 7 hours.]

As the battle core reached full operation, hot steam came out of the body.

At the same time, there was an energy that could upset the heavens and earth. Though it could only be maintained for 7 hours, it would be enough. It needed to be enough. He needed to finish it in here.

Pang!

Cha Jun Sung dug into the Shapiollin's chest. The power of the fully deployed over-booster broke the sound barrier.

It was possible to maintain this tremendous speed during the allotted time without trouble.

"The nerve of an insignificant insect!"

"You were also one of those insignificant insects before you became infected with the disease."

She felt threatened. The slackened Shapiollin dropped her poker face.

"Let's end this."

It had been a long journey. He had put everything down for this battle. He had prayed and prayed. He prayed that if there is a god, it would hold his hand.

Chapter 3

There were 10 one-hour videos. Each of them was extravagant and ostentatious enough to be comparable to a blockbuster movie. They could not take their eyes off of them.

The lifers were watching a life mission between the Evil Queen and Overload's battle, and it was almost enough to strip the gamers of their souls. The last video was especially amazing.

Overload lost both of his eyes and his left arm, but he did not care and killed the fleeing Evil Queen.

-[Is this for real?]

-[Wow... I spent the whole night watching the videos, and I didn't even go to school the next day.]

-[It's surprising that he even found the Evil Queen. But to think he was able to catch her? A Level 9 mutant?]

-[That's Overload alright! He's on a different level from the guys who fire their arms from a distance!]

-[I threw up raiding the Level 6 mutants. I guess I have to go kill myself.]

-[He diced her with just a combat weapon. How do you do something like that?]

-[To the person above, watch Overload's videos from 10 years ago in order. You'll know if you watch. Your world will change.]

-[What do you mean his world will change? This person seems to be mistaken – your universe will change.]

Scroll.

His mouse rolled through the comments on the video. He went through hundreds of

pages with 100 comments each.

“Good.”

Cha Jun Sung looked through his blog. It had been one week since he uploaded the video.

The fervor did not fade and, with time, there were even more visitors. It was evidence that word of his raid with the Evil Queen was spreading.

It would have been unfortunate if he did not receive this kind of response. He had invested a lot in this raid. Thinking about the balance, she was not an opponent that could be defeated with pure skill.

When he caught a Level 8 mutant, he had earned two and a half times the investment. He was not sure how much he would raise this time, but he was expecting it to be more than ever before.

“I guess the mission was a success. It’s needless to say there’s no greater glory to commemorate a retirement.”

He had played Life Mission for 10 years. He began playing games ever since he was young and his start was the same as everyone else’s – but his mastery was obvious soon after.

One day he wondered what it would be like if he filmed his games and posted the videos up. As a joke, he created his own blog and uploaded each and every one of them.

Mutant strategy, promotion, creation. There had not been very many visitors at first but after 3 years, he had become a power blogger.

That was the start of a new world. When he became a power blogger, several advertising partners came in. He did not make a profit off of Life Mission, but it was still a good amount of money.

Cha Jun Sung was Overload, one of the 36 rankers in Life Mission, a game enjoyed by millions of people. The synergy he demonstrated was impressive.

There were currently about 100 advertisements on his banner, giving him an income of around \$100,000 every month. At this rate, it was comparable to a small business.

Look.

There were usually 400,000 visitors in one day. Sometimes it even went up to 600,000 on a good day. But day before yesterday, the site had accumulated 1.2 million views. In many ways, it was a happy event.

“I’ll have to hurry and wrap it up so I can finally go travel. I can’t play games my whole life.”

Life Mission was fun. It was almost as addictive as drugs.

Even after playing for 10 years, the possibilities were endless. But he did not want to leave his body in capsule and play in his room until he grew old and died.

“Let’s see. The parts I have to sell are the legend patch, 15 sets of switching equipment, metal cyborgs, and 5 mansions. Ah! This is one I’d like to keep.”

Even without connecting to the game, it was possible to see the market situation through searches.

Most of the items he had registered on the auction had been sold. This was bound to happen because he had posted items of the highest quality for cheaper than the market price.

“Hades... My everything.”

-[+18 ultimate Hades blade.]

5 years ago, he had taken \$500,000 worth of materials and \$300,000 for reinforcement to create this treasure.

Elite weapons had a lower rating than legends so they did not have as many options, but it was not +18 for no reason. The most important attribute for bladers is by far agility; it was still an unbroken record.

There was a famous rumor amongst lifers that a member of Middle East royalty was inspired by his enhanced video and had given a lot of money.

“Is there someone who would be willing to buy this?”

Using it as an occupation other than blader was like a pig wearing a pearl necklace. There were only a few lifers who could handle being a blader perfectly.

“I’ll just keep it if it doesn’t sell. Honestly, it’s a waste to give to someone else.”

Other items could be bought with money, but not Hades.

It seemed foolish when he was quitting, but didn’t he need to keep one symbol to later prove that he used to have a great reputation as “Overload”?

“Bye.”

Tatak!

Cha Jun Sung posted a notice on his blog saying that he was no longer playing Life Mission.

There were comments upon comments. The comments were a motley of people congratulating him on leaving, some saying that everything he had done until now was a waste to throw away, and some begging him for items.

Pushuk!

As the computer powered off, the overheated machine cooled down.

“I guess I would have been working at part-time jobs until I reached this age if it hadn’t been for Life Mission?”

He laid on his bed and looked at the ceiling. The game and his life were at a standstill.

He could not believe that he had put everything down. He felt like come tomorrow, or even immediately, he might feel the impulse to access the game to fight mutants.

Ping.

A text message came through, because his phone rang. Cha Jun Sung did not get up and reached his hand out to grab his phone. Friends? Advertiser? Could be spam.

-[The virtual version of Life Mission has been stopped from May 7, 2020. Thank you for your interest. We will meet you in the reality version.]

“That’s a new kind of spam.”

Cha Jun Sung gave his best wishes to the spamming company and deleted the message.

Seuk.

While he was playing around on his phone, he instinctively went on the Life Mission homepage. He rubbed his eyes as though he had seen something that did not make sense.

“What is this saying? Is it a joke? This wasn’t spam? Is my phone broken?”

The same text from the message was on the homepage. On top of that, the whole site must have been paralyzed because he could not do anything beyond looking the text.

Wiing.

Cha Jun Sung powered up the computer again. If he wanted to confirm it, he needed to look on the computer and not his phone.

He plopped down.

His legs were weakening. It was the same on the computer. All top 10 real-time searches on the portal site were about Life Mission’s suspended service.

“Why now?”

Cha Jun Sung and the lifers had known that this was going to happen at some point.

Life Mission was strange. First, this incredible system was open to people for free. Even the maintenance costs were funded by the company.

Its industrial utility value must have been overwhelming, but it had stayed the same for 10 years.

“Was that contract about this?”

To create a Life Mission account, he had needed to sign a contract.

It said that the company would not be responsible even if the service was suspended.

He had thought that this meant that they just needed to deal with it since the company was taking on everything else.

Sigh.

He sighed automatically. There was still a fair number of equipment he had not taken care of yet.

The elation he felt at succeeding in the raid fell flat. At this rate, it was hard to break even. It was even more frustrating that he couldn't complain.

"There are going to be people who commit suicide..."

It was not a joke. It was common for people to put all of their salaries into this game.

In the most extreme cases, there was a person who sold his house to buy an item. Cha Jun Sung experienced minimal damage because he had coincidentally quit, but those people were ruined.

Jing!

-[Apologies for the inconvenience. The virtual version has been suspended. We ask that you use the reality version that will be running soon.]

He opened the capsule to check, but it was for nothing. The homepage and virtual path were blocked. Now, he had to fold everything even if he did not want to.

"But what's the reality version?"

If it was an update, there was no reason to suspend the service. He could not figure out what the company was thinking.

Could they be playing some kind of joke?

Ping.

The bell rang again. Cha Jun Sung instinctively read the text message. It was from the company. The message was as ridiculous as the one before.

-[Would you like to activate the reality version of Life Mission?]

-[Yes/No]

Chapter 4

“Does the text message send a signal to the capsule and start the update?”

Cha Jun Sung was complaining about the hassle, but he had already pressed YES. He would stop playing, but first he needed to take care of his leftover items.

-[Date and time: May 9, 2020 8pm. Present location: Seoul, Cheomdang-dong, home. Location: 255. 213. Confirming Cha Jun Sung. Running the summons.]

Flash.

“Uh...?”

Then he felt something weird. His vision faded to white and he disappeared from his home. The only evidence that he had been there was the warm temperature of his seat.



Cha Jun Sung rubbed his eyes. His focus blurred as he was exposed to a bright light without any protection. His vision returned after blinking a few times.

-[Reserved lifer selection complete. Standard for selection is Life Mission account holders.]

-[Cha Jun Sung.]

-[The only person who completed a Level-S mission in the 10 years of the virtual version of Life Mission by killing the Level 9 Evil Queen mutant, Shapiollin.]

It was the kind of voice that digs into the brain. Maybe because it was monotonous and without emotion. It sounded like the lower level cyborgs he had seen every day.

He could clearly remember downloading the reality version of Life Mission on his phone. The problem was that he was in a strange place when he opened his eyes.

“Who’s talking? Where am I?”

-[This is the briefing room where you will hear the explanation for your mission. It is also where you can learn the value of the equipment you may need to purchase.]

“Did I connect to Life Mission? They said it was suspended.”

Cha Jun Sung was deep in thought, moreso of being connected to the game than suspicious.

-[If you are referring to the connection to the virtual version in the capsule, it has been suspended. Reserved lifer Mr. Cha Jun Sung has connected to the reality version.]

Could it be that he had not been able to identify the situation fully? Cha Jun Sung heard the response to his question, but he could not understand what the unknown voice was saying.

Cha Jun Sung stood aloof for 10 minutes and smirked as he spoke,

“Log out.”

He had not gone to sleep but unless this was a dream, he had connected to the game. If not that, then he could not explain the situation. All he had to do was get out.

-[This is a firm reality. You cannot leave until you complete the mission.]

“Are you joking? You’re saying this is reality? I’m going to go crazy. Have I played the game for too long? I heard that people went crazy from playing Life Mission, but I didn’t think it would happen to me.”

Cha Jun Sung called himself insane as he hit his own head. He felt something on his wrist and lowered his arm to take a look at it.

“A watch smartphone? I don’t wear watches, so what is this?”

-[Through this PDA, you and I are able to communicate whenever we need, even if we are not in the briefing room.]

-[Once you complete the tutorial mission, this device will make it easy to access the store that will open. There are only restrictions on some functions.]

Cha Jun Sung looked around him half in desperation. He did not know where he was,

but as time passed, his head cooled.

“It looks like a mechanic’s store from the outside, but its contents seem all-inclusive.”

There were items that beginners could use, along with a body modification room and an item modification room. To put it simply, everything necessary was here.

“Hm. You said this is a briefing room? What do I have to do to get out?”

-[As long as you’ve entered as a reserved lifer, you must complete the mission.]

“Please explain in a way that I can understand.”

Cha Jun Sung was conversing with the voice. He could not believe it, but he had decided to accept the reality. There was nothing he could do even if he wanted to get out.

-[The overall framework is similar to the virtual version. But it is a firm reality.]

-[If you die here, you are actually dying in real life. Starting with the tutorial of the mission that will progress, I, Odin, will be your supporter as well as your helper.]

Odin gave a step-by-step explanation in detail. He did not tell him everything. He was programmed from the beginning to provide just the basics.

“Ha ha!”

Cha Jun Sung laughed blankly as he listened to the explanation. The part of the explanation he liked least was that he would actually die if he died in the game. Honestly, he was still dubious.

It was operated by beings in space. If it was not a dream, it was a game. It had to be. He did not know why he could not wake up or leave, but he figured he would find out something soon enough if he just went along with it.

“Let’s start immediately.”

-[Searching for tutorials appropriate for reserved lifer Cha Jun Sung.]

Woong!

-[Tutorial mission: Closed areas] [Goal: Escape]

-[Scenario: Escape from a building with A virus infectants] [Reward: 100 points]

Cha Jun Sung frowned. They weren't telling him to escape without any equipment, were they?

-[Look to your left and there are accoutrements. If you listen to what I say and use them, you will not lose your life.]

Cha Jun Sung found the bag and looked inside. All that was inside was bedding, food, medicine, spray, tape, and a dagger. He wished there was a gun.

-[Are you ready?]

"Sure."

-[Approved. You will be sent to the tutorial mission closed area. Mission start.]

Hwak!

His field of view reversed, revealing a different atmosphere from the briefing room. When he became used to the sudden change in view, a drab building welcomed him.

Chapter 5

It was a dismal space. Everything was blocked with musty cement, and all he could see was a worn out desk, window, and a door leading outside.

No matter how much a game was like reality, there were some significant differences when compared. The key difference was the experience. Experiencing it with the body.

“My body?”

-[It is your body, not the character you used in the virtual version.]

Discomfort from the heat and a fishy smell came through his nose.

There was also an ominous feeling that could not be explained. There were no elements of convenience to a gamer. He was being awakened to reality more and more.

Kikik!

Seuseuk.

There was the sound of life outside the building. They must be mutants.

It must have been because he had 10 years of experience in Life Mission, but he stuck his back against the wall and moved towards the window. He wanted to examine the situation outside.

“There are more than a few buildings. Just looking out, there must be hundreds.”

-[They are all for the reserved lifer. This entire region is at difficulty level C, so the building you are starting at is just the tip of the iceberg.]

Cha Jun Sung listened to Odin’s explanation as he geared his hearing to the movement outside. He intended to move slowly since there was not an allotted time.

Click!

-[Level 1 mutant Kawod is approaching. Take out your odorless spray and use it on your body. You need to complete this in 1 minute.]

“Keuk!”

Cha Jun Sung looked through his bag and took the spray out.

He had flipped everything out of his bag while trying to take it out quickly. It was an item he had used thousands of times in the virtual version. His brain was not functioning when he thought of it as real.

Chiik.

A transparent powder floated in the air. There was no scent. Just like its name, it was odorless.

-[There is a large vent on the right. Go up and hide.]

The vent was installed 3 meters above the ground. It was a height that could not be reached without tall height or muscular strength.

Cha Jun Sung looked at the desk and shook his head. The place was completely silent. The desk was too heavy to lift. If he dragged it, there would be too much noise.

Pat!

He put force into both feet and kicked off from the ground. His 184cm height and body moved through exercise went through the air.

“Hup!”

It felt like he was doing a pull-up. He had thrown his bag to the floor. There was no need to hang on to it if it would not help him live, and it was too heavy for him to bring up.

Once he was inside, it was not hard to crawl around because the ventilator was torn.

Kiik.

Right when Cha Jun Sung hid himself, the worn door opened and a Level 1 Kawod

entered the room sniffing around just as Odin had anticipated.

‘It’s the same!’

With a smashed and deformed face, it was the size of an 8 or 9 year old elementary school student. The only weapons that could be of danger were its sharp teeth and nails.

A coward. It was exactly the same as the Kawod he had seen in the virtual version.

Weak alone and weak as a crowd, they were at the bottom of the mutant food chain. An adult man could take one on with his bare hands even if he was wounded.

-[There are 21 Kawods in this building. I recommend that you avoid them since you are not armed to take them all on.]

The only weapon Cha Jun Sung had was a dagger. If it were only a few, he could have done something, but he would become a piece of meat if 21 came at him.

Sniff sniff!

The Kawod bent over and went around the room. Cha Jun Sung’s heart beat to the sound of its sniffing. It was a fear-inducing game of hide-and-seek.

The Kawod that had been sniffing around everywhere put his nose to Cha Jun Sung’s bag. It seemed there was a remaining odor because he had not sprayed it.

Seuruk.

An unexpected situation, the Kawod laid down next to the bag. Does it like the smell?

Since the building was their home, it was their business where they lay. But why, of all places, next to his bag? Cha Jun Sung almost threw a fit.

“Hey there. Do I have to take that bag?”

Cha Jun Sung slightly opened his mouth. Odin understood what he was saying.

-[Necessities for Level E missions are sold for 100 points in the store.]

-[Points are as precious as your life in the real version, so you are expected to recover all of your items unless it is absolutely impossible.]

“What are you telling me to do with one dagger? I’m just an ordinary human.”

-[Is the Overload who killed the Evil Queen afraid of a Kawod?]

“Are you kidding me right now? That’s a game and this is reality.”

-[The virtual version is a training facility created to prepare you for the real version. Nothing is different. Act as you did there.]

The instructions he had to follow were obvious. Kill the Kawod and recover the equipment. Choice? None. He needed to do it. If he wanted to go home, he needed to kill it.

Cha Jun Sung thought about it while lying down in the vent and made up his mind.

“Fine. I’ll do it.”

Surprisingly, his vision became clearer as he abandoned his negative thoughts. He thought of the best way to kill the Kawod.

“I have to take a look at the ventilator first.”

Cha Jun Sung crawled through the vent. He would recover the bag later. He needed to see how long the vent was and how he would get down.

Tak.

Though it was uncomfortable, he took the dagger by his teeth. It would become a problem if he put it in a pocket and scratched something, or if he lost it. The vent was fairly long.

It did not connect to every room. There were places scattered throughout where he could escape.

Odin gave him the information on each room he discovered, as well as the room the Kawod was sleeping in. He was doing his job as a supporter properly.

Cha Jun Sung went around for hours. It took a long time because movement was difficult, but he had been able to familiarize himself with everything he could see through the ventilator.

There was a kitchen about nine to ten meters from the stairs that went downwards. There were doors in the front and back, so he could use them during an emergency escape.

There was the danger of being surrounded from either side, but if the Kawod were the same from the game, they would be too cowardly to scatter and would move in a group if they sensed danger.

Tak.

Cha Jun Sung ended his short journey and returned to his original location. The Kawod had passed out sleeping. He did not attack right away, but thought of a plan.

‘If I show up, I’m sure he’ll get scared and run away, making them all charge in.’

If that happened, he would have the time it took for the Kawod to run away and come back with the group.

He could move the bag to the vent in that time. It was difficult to move everything at once, but he could do some items one by one. The key was the amount of time he would have.

Should he just kill it without anyone knowing? It would be okay if the smell of blood did not spread, but he would be in trouble if something went wrong.

Shak.

Cha Jun Sung brandished the dagger. He had not imagined killing a living being in real life. Even if that being was a mutant.

‘Kawods like dark places because of their sensitivity to sunlight.’

While he was effectively invisible, Kawods still had an enhanced sense of hearing and smell. Since he used the spray, all he had to be careful of was making sound.

He lowered himself as close to the ground as possible. Even if he fell to the ground

carefully, he would still make a sound. He needed to divert the attention before his location was detected.

Cha Jun Sung hung by the strength of his arms. The Kawod had not yet caught on but as soon as it did, it would either run to him or run away.

Taekang!

Kya?

There was a fricative as the sheath fell. The Kawod awoke startled and looked to where the sound had come from. At that moment, Cha Jun Sung ran.

Pat!

As soon as he hit the floor, he slashed the Kawod's throat mercilessly.

As its thin childlike throat was slit, blood gushed out as though from a fountain. The Kawod tried to yell, but the sound did not come out of its throat filled with blood.

Its vitality was weak. It would die even if he did not attack more.

Puk!

Cha Jun Sung kicked the Kawod's face with all of his strength. He created an even more unseemly sight as the slit in its neck opened up further.

"Damn, damn!"

Chapter 6

The sensation of slitting a throat remained on his hands. He took his accoutrements apart and threw each of the items into the vents.

The emptied bag became lighter. Cha Jun Sung wore the pack and went back up into the vent. It was narrow, but he could move his body.

Chiik.

He sprayed the odorless spray on the vent and bag. He wanted to block the entrance, but the cover had become so crushed that it was impossible.

-[You have acquired 10 points.]

-[Information on the Level 1 mutant Kawod has been added to the PDA.]

The Kawod whose neck had been sliced was dead with its tongue hanging out. Cha Jun Sung ignored Odin's notice and began moving. He could check it once his safety was assured.

Kikik.

After Cha Jun Sung disappeared, a few more Kawod came in. It must have been because of the smell of blood. They looked around the dead Kawod and opened their mouths.

Kwajik.

Bones came out as the skin was ripped off. One Kawod had its face in the stomach and swallowed the intestines. Cha Jun Sung would have thrown up if he had witnessed the scene.

It could not be helped. Kawods were at the bottom of the food chain.

Hunting?

It was difficult to even survive. It would be genocide even if dozens of Level 2 mutants

came charging. Since they could not starve, cannibalism became the obvious route.

Kyakyakyakya!

Soon, other Kawods also gathered. Just as the helper had said, there were 21.

Since 1 was dead, there were 20 left. Cha Jun Sung heard their laughter from a distance and solidified his commitment to escape.



Ack!

Hearing the ear-splitting screech, Cha Jun Sung dug deeper into a corner of the kitchen.

This was already the third time he heard that sound. It seems four lifers including himself were running the tutorials. But three people had already died.

“You said you’re Odin? Is the tutorial easy or hard?”

-[Should I calculate the variables?]

“Other than those.”

-[With an average mind and body, the difficulty is normal.]

“If you calculate it?”

-[The difficulty of the game is set, but we do not know what might happen at any time. If a change occurs, we cannot guarantee safety even in a tutorial.]

It seems they had packed lifers into a space that was appropriate to hold the tutorials.

And it also sounded like anything could come out at any time to raise the difficulty since it was not a game. In some ways, it was an irresponsible response.

“I did exercise a bit, but am I worse than average? Why am I so tired?”

-[It is because you excessively protect your body. Your body exceeds the average by a

lot, but this is a situation where your mind does not sustain it.]

“Forget it.”

Cha Jun Sung gave up on talking. Protecting? Anyone would try to protect himself. It is his own fault if he gets involved without thinking and dies.

The screaming people are the ones who could not differentiate between reality and virtual reality.

“It’s safe here.”

The kitchen doors were made of sturdy iron. The Kawod would not be able to break it down with their strength.

-[You cannot do anything in your isolated state.]

“I know. It’s a bother to talk about every little thing, so just give me a route out.”

He needed a place to be comfortable. An exposed area was dangerous. His plan was to move according to a strategy after fully understanding the tutorial.

“It’s easy as long as the Kawods don’t cause a problem.”

-[There are four Kawods in this area. It is the same downstairs.]

Just getting down the stairs meant escape. He did not even expect a machine gun. Even if he just had a pistol, he could use it with the dagger.

“I’ll have to kill them.”

He did not want to be prey, so he would have to become the predator. It would be good to avoid them, but even if there were 100 of them, he would be willing to meet all 100 in this type of environment. It would be better to reduce their numbers and expand the space he could move in. He was not even that averse to it after killing one.

“The nearest one?”

-[One in each of the two rooms between the hallway and front. Two in the room you started in.]

Cognate predators slept in one place. The hallway was open and a small room was past the hall. The room he started in was optimal.

“You said that as long as I don’t die, you can put me back to my normal state even if my arms or legs get cut off?”

-[It is possible.]

“Confirmed.”

Cha Jun Sung took out the tape from his bag and wound it around his arms and legs tightly. He needed to do this at least to avoid mortal wounds since he does not have armor.

Hu!

He breathed in deeply before acting out his plan. It would be a lie if he said that he was not nervous. This was his way of trying to stay alive. That was all.



Puk.

The dagger dug deep into the Kawod’s heart. A humanoid mutant’s body structure is similar to that of a person. The location of the heart was the same. Instantly killed!

“It’s tiring...”

14 of them?

Ah! With the first one he killed, it was 15. He spent the whole day on just the 3rd floor. As long as there were no Kawods, going down would be easy.

He could leave after killing as many as he could. When he asked Odin if he could jump out of the window instead of going down the stairs, he had said that I could try it if I wanted to die.

If he were unlucky, he would be overcome with mutants or he could even meet stronger mutants. He aptly gave up on any path aside from the stairs at that.

“It’s the last medicine.”

The medicine in his pack had healing effects. Homeostasis began as soon as he put it on, and a scab formed. He did not have any mortal wounds, but he had suffered quite a few minor injuries.

Especially his arms and legs. This was the result of pushing forward with trust in this medicine’s effects and tape. Even this much had only been possible because he had the medicine.

Kak!

“It’s been awhile since we heard that. It’s the fourth.”

It was the first scream he had heard in a day. It seemed the other lifers were doing fairly well. If not, wouldn’t he have heard a series of screams like he did yesterday?

Eujuk eujuk.

“How could they be rock heads in the game and in real life?”

-[It was a fact that Kawods were stupid. Level 1 meant that they had been infected by the A virus, but only aggregated inferior cells due to failing to adapt.]

Level 2 was still a low level.

A mutant needed to reach Level 3 to show some success in adaptation.

“That’s a frank assessment. At any rate, I just have 6 to catch?”

-[Yes, that’s right.]

After fighting with two, he felt that he could take on a third. However, he decided to be careful because his stamina had weakened and he had a lot of minor injuries.

“Let’s start again...”

“Assholes! Where is this! Send me home. You assholes!”

As Cha Jun Sung was about to go up the vent, he stopped at the ranting he heard

nearby. By his tone, he must have been summoned while drunk.

“Reality version? Damn! I blew everything! My life savings were wasted!”

Cha Jun Sung was not an writer, but he detailed out the man’s behavior in his head.

The man had heard the news that the game was suspended and drank as he downloaded the application for the reality version. He had been sent here after being summoned to the briefing room.

Since he was drunk out of his mind, everything the helper said was nonsense and the quiet closed area was perfect for his tantrum.

“That man’s on a roof. The Kawods can’t get up there because the door is locked?”

-[It is open. There is another reason why the Kawod are not going up there.]

“Huh?”

-[You must remain calm. You need to take deep breaths and maintain your composure.]

He was bewildered. The man was the one in danger, but why was he being told to stay calm?

Kung!

A fear-inducing roar. Cha Jun Sung’s legs weakened at the roar and he plopped down. The man did not have a very different reaction.

“This, this sound... Could the boss of this closed area be *that* guy?”

Chapter 7

-[He is approaching due to the man's noise. I recommend you flee.]

"His specialty is the same as it is in the virtual reality version?"

-[It is the same.]

"Then it's okay. I can hold my breath."

-[We will generate a special mission with your permission.]

-[Level D mission: Predation of Cyclops] [Goal: Attainment]

-[Scenario: The owner of the closed area appeared due to a reserved lifer's drunken tirade. Avoid the Cyclops' detection and watch its predation] [Reward: 5000 points]

Cyclops.

It was a name given to him because he looked like the one-eyed giant in Greek mythology. The only difference was that instead of one, there were dozens of eyes on its face.

He boasted a steel-like strength with muscles covering his 9-10 meter long body. His strength was as intense as his size, so he could even crush a truck.

Among mutants with uncanny abilities, he was called an original strength. He was among the top of Level 5.

Boom!

As the ground and building shook, powder flew. Cha Jun Sung held his breath and looked towards the next building. He could see a large figure.

The Cyclops detects life through their breathing. It is dangerous if one moves wildly, but the Cyclops thinks that someone is inanimate if he holds his breath and is careful in his movement.

The Cyclops' method is to differentiate between what is potentially harmful and what is not.

"Cyclops? Hah! You're so mad I killed you that you appear in my dream?"

The man spoke gibberish. Any skilled lifer needed to deal with the Cyclops as a required mission. It was popular one because there were a lot of rewards.

Burup!

Gulp!

One of the Cyclops' eyes focused on Cha Jun Sung's exact location. It looked away after a moment because he did not move and held his breath.

"Come at me asshole! I'll give you a blast with my +13 Titan!"

Though the man was speaking nonsense because he was drunk, Cha Jun Sung could tell that he was a skilled lifer in the game.

The weapon he mentioned was a laser with tremendous power. It had a weight and volume that only someone at an elite level could lift.

One could handle it by going through body modification and using the battle shoot skill, but it cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. It was not an exaggeration to say that the man had invested his life savings for it.

Boom.

The Cyclops just rolled its eyes around and did not act. Was it confused because the man did not fear it?

Kung!

Its thick arm lifted into the air. He stood still with patience. It observed the man out of curiosity, but that was only momentary.

Kwang!

One blow. A part of the building crushed under the Cyclops' blow.

“Huh?”

The man flailed his arms. He stumbled as the roof collapsed under the force. It would have been the same even if he had not been drunk on alcohol.

Pat.

The Cyclops snatched at the falling man. It was not careful and its strength capable of ripping a man apart showed, destroying the bones in his body.

The man's broken bones must have dug into his organs, because blood sputtered from his mouth. His eyes rolled back in pain and he began to convulse.

“Cr, crazy...”

Cha Jun Sung stepped away from the window for a moment to take a breath as he watched the following scene. His body shook as though his own bones were being broken.

Eujuk.

Kyak!

The man's arm was being chewed. The next were his legs, head, and body.

It was obvious that it intended on giving him pain as it ate him. The Cyclops had a horrid personality and was careful with his meals like a gourmet enjoying delicacies.

Smack smack.

It had taken seconds for the man to disappear. The Cyclops smacked its lips as though it wanted more. It was so large that the man had not made a difference.

“I have to hurry up and get out of here.”

The Cyclops was right in front of him. He thought he was going to have a heart attack if he stayed any longer.

-[The mission has not ended. It will be considered a failure if you run away.]

“What? But he killed the man?”

-[That reserved lifer’s death is not the predation I talked about.]

“That that...”

Cha Jun Sung was silent. Suddenly, he recalled the eye he had seen through the window.

He had used knowledge of its specialty to avoid its sight, but it still focused on his exact location. Other reserved lifers were doing tutorials here.

Pang!

The Cyclops struck at the building next to the one he had just knocked down.

Ack!

Reserved lifers emerged. They had been discovered. The Cyclops repeated the same action a few times. At some point, its hand was full.

Brack.

It squeezed its grip. Blood came pouring down like rain. The Cyclops put them to his mouth and quenched its thirst. It chewed and ate the bloodless bodies.

‘Hell.’

3 people yesterday.

6 people today.

9 people have died in total.

10 people including Cha Jun Sung. With a rough estimate, the chance of survival was 10%. Even if there were hundreds of thousands of lifers, the number would be reduced quickly at this rate.

“I can go now, right?”

-[The last obstacle remains. It is part of the mission. Stay until the end.]

Cha Jun Sung was going to ask what nonsense that was, but covered his mouth with his hand. The Cyclops' dozens of eyes were facing him.

Drip!

His cold sweat fell to the floor. Why was it staying and not leaving? Had he been discovered? If so, he would have the same fate as the other lifers who died.

'Oof! Go away! I said go away!'

After waiting for 1 minute, he became dizzy and his chest felt stifled.

The Cyclops did not waver. He knew why Odin was telling him not to move on. This was a test. He lived if he got past it, and would die if he could not.

'Staying longer is too dangerous...'

He got past 2 minutes. At this rate, he would suffocate to death before the Cyclops killed him.

-[A little longer.]

Odin may not have known because he was a machine, but there was nothing as painful as not breathing. 2 minutes for someone with weak lungs would have been enough to make them faint at the least.

"Puha!"

-[Congratulations. You have cleared the Level D mission, Cyclops' Predation.]

-[You have earned 5000 points.]

-[You have met the conditions to open the store. You can use it up to Level D, and it will open once you clear the tutorial mission.]

He had been lucky.

As Cha Jun Sung was letting out his breath, the Cyclops turned its attention away. He would have become a piece of meat with his blood squeezed out if he had let his breath out 1 second earlier.

-[Oh no.]

“Now what?”

Chapter 8

-[A Kawod has picked up your scent. You had sweat so much in fear of the Cyclops that you got rid of the odorless spray's effect.]

"You should have told me earlier!"

Cha Jun Sung yelled as he ran to the vent. He had gone up and down it so much that he got up to it with much more ease.

-[It is too late.]

Kiik!

Two Kawods entered the room. Cha Jun Sung stopped his useless movement and grabbed his dagger. He could not show his back to the enemy.

-[The rest of the Kawods are observing the Cyclops from the first floor. This is your chance.]

Tatat!

Cha Jun Sung acted like he was attacking and closed the door to the room. The Kawods who were suddenly trapped scrambled around before giving up and lunging at him.

Puk.

His long leg hit the stomach of a Kawod running at him.

It was light and flew to hit the wall. Cha Jun Sung threatened the others with the dagger and went to the one against the wall and stepped on him.

Kwak!

"Keuk!"

There was a sharp pain in his shoulder. The one in good condition had taken advantage

of him. He could hear his skin ripping under its sharp teeth.

“Assholes!”

He was angry. Because of the pain? Because he had been bitten by something half his size? More than that, he was angry with the entire situation he was stuck in.

Puk.

He stabbed the Kawod’s head with the dagger he had clenched in his fist.

It relaxed its grip as its brain was penetrated, and it fell to the ground. He took out the dagger and stabbed the one that he was stepping on.

“Four Kawods.”

A vehemence came from Cha Jun Sung’s eyes. There were only a few left.

This hell was over if he could just kill those last few. He did not go back into the vent. He intended to just kill them as he saw them.



Kaek!

The last Kawod fell over. He could finally head back.

-[Congratulations. You have cleared the closed area tutorial mission.]

-[You have earned 100 points.]

-[The store is open. Would you like to go to the briefing room?]

“Yes.”

When he nodded his head, his vision faded to white just like when he had come to the closed area, and the briefing room appeared. The principle seemed to be similar to dimensional movement.

-[Will you treat your injuries? You will be cured to your normal state with 50 points.]

“Yeah.”

His clothes had been ripped to rags and he was caked in blood all over his body.

If he went back like this, he would have to live in a hospital.

-[Your treatment will start once you lay in the capsule to the left.]

Cha Jun Sung followed Odin’s instructions. It felt cool. His injuries were healed with 50 points. His clothes remained the same.

-[Congratulations.]

“Congratulations?”

He was bewildered. If Odin was a person, he would have beat him up.

-[If you take advantage of the 5260 points you have, excluding the 50 you used, you will be able to raise your chance of survival to the highest for your next mission.]

“Ha ha! It’s so funny my stomach hurts. If I come back here, I’m not a person.”

Why would he come back here? He had a leisurely life where he lived in a good house with a good car and good food. This was the last time he was coming here.

-[You will return.]

“You’re sure?”

-[I am sure.]

“And your evidence for that?”

-[The virtual Overload can become reality.]

Cha Jun Sung blinked at the unexpected response. Odin continued speaking.

-[I will tell you one thing. Body modification is possible in the Level D store.]

-[You can purchase the battle shoot in Level C and the ultimate Hades blade that you

prized will be in Level A.]

His head was spinning. Cha Jun Sung was on the smart side. He was interpreting what that meant. He spoke again to check, "You're saying that what I did in Life Mission is possible in real life?"

-[Yes.]

"Goodness."

Science.

Nothing was impossible through science in Life Mission.

As long as he had the money, he could make anything. A fearsome weapon was an accessory and cyborgs that resembled people rolled around like rocks.

If that were to happen on the Earth? It would disrupt law and order.

-[An age where one cannot live without power will soon come to the Earth. You may not want to come at your own will, but something else will push you to return.]

"It's because of you guys. You can just leave it alone whether it's reality or virtual."

-[Are you sure that is so?]

He could not say anymore. Going further than this was going beyond what Odin was permitted. He knew Odin would not reveal any more.

But there was one thing he was clear on. There would be a time when everyone, including Cha Jun Sung, would understand this whole situation.

"Ah! I don't know! Just send me back for now. I need to clear my mind."

-[There is a basic manual in your pack. Read it when you have time.]

Pat.

The light flashed. It made his eyes sting, but he would go through this countless times if he could just go home.

-[Lifer Cha Jun Sung.]

-[Tutorial at Level E, succeeded at Level D special mission.]

Odin recorded Cha Jun Sung's information on the successful mission after he disappeared, and Cha Jun Sung returned back to his real world.



"Hahahaha..."

Cha Jun Sung laid on his bed and laughed. Because he was happy? Because he was baffled. The pack he had received in the briefing room was sitting right in front of him.

He was 99.9% sure that it was reality. But 0.1% of him still believed it was virtual.

"I almost died."

He had experienced the fear of death that he thought he would not have felt within the next 50 years.

He was not sure if it was a joke from the gods or if it was a test from aliens, but he was sure that it had happened and that it was going to continue to happen.

"Let's see what happens."

They had said that the first round lifer selection criteria was creating an account in Life Mission.

That meant that Cha Jun Sung was not going through this alone. If he waited the situation out, forums on this issue would be created.

The human psychology likes to explore. He did not have to bother with it because those with impatient natures would get involved instead.

Chapter 9

Often, people have strange dreams. Call them dog dreams. A few cannot shake them off. There is nothing they can do. It is not reality. But it bothers them.

If multiple people have the same dream and acknowledge that they are not dreaming and that it is reality, they would work to figure out what the phenomenon is.

-[I killed 5 Kawods with a hammer.]

-[3 Gremlins.]

-[Everyone. My friend did not come back. I think he died there.]

-[Mine was to steal something weird.]

-[Same with me. I had to steal 2 eggs from Beck and it felt like I was shooting Mission Impossible.]

Tatak.

Cha Jun Sung looked through the conversation in the chat room on his blog.

As he had expected, there were a lot of people who had gone through what he did. It had not yet been reported on the news, but that was not far off from happening either.

-[I caught 21 Kawods by using cognate predators as bait. My goal was to escape, but there was nothing I could do because they were blocking the exit.]

-[Amazing!]

-[Are you a UFC world champion or something? How could someone catch 21?]

-[Don't lie.]

"I can't believe it either ok."

Cha Jun Sung had been learning fencing since he was young, and added boxing in order to maintain his health while playing Life Mission. Had that helped?

Reading the text in the chat room, it seemed the average time getting in and out was 3 hours. It was fast because they had only faced 5 to 6 Kawods.

“Some people had an easy time while some spent an entire day on it. That’s pretty shitty.”

The day after his return, he read the manual. If he spent a day inside the mission, a day passed in real life as well. It was an exact 1:1 ratio.

It was important that he could not bring items from reality into the briefing room or mission location. The helper decides what is allowed and what is not.

-[Will you go again?]

Cha Jun Sung thought for a second before texting back.

-[I’m going to go. Why?]

-[Hey fake Overload, you haven’t gone into the store yet, right? Try going in.]

Cha Jun Sung looked at the PDA on his wrist. It was a piece of equipment with a lot of functions. There were so many that he could not even list them all.

‘Alright let’s open it.’

He did not open the store as people expected him to. He was curious, but had completely forgotten about it with his thoughts about whether or not he would go again.

Ping.

He operated the PDA. A clear hologram and a list window flashed.

-[Store: Level D]

-[Equipment] [Food] [Medicine] [Materials] [Reinforcements] [Synthesis]
[Transformation] [Miscellaneous] [Body Modification] [Daily Necessities]

The list became more detailed when he clicked on a menu item. For example, if he went into Equipment, there was Weapon and Armor.

-[Did you open it?]

-[Yes.]

-[There are a lot of things on the menu, but try going into just one. Go into Materials.]

Cha Jun Sung went into Materials. A motley of materials made him dizzy. There was a wide variety of materials. Most of them were strange.

-[Try typing precious metals or gems in the search window. You'll be surprised.]

He tried searching precious metals. Platinum, gold, silver, etc. – they were sold by weight.

-[Gold 100g: 100 points]

-[Description: Material that goes into item synthesis, reinforcement, and transformation.]

“Was the price of gold \$5,000 for 100g? The reward for the tutorial was 100 points. No, it would be 150 points for 150g since he had killed a bunch of mutants. He had earned \$7,500 in one go. So in the end, it was money?”

\$7,500.

It is too little to change a person's life, but it was more than a month's wages at a good job. This was a world where people would sell their souls for money.

High risk, high return. Even if it was a hell where people had to risk their lives, there would be plenty of people willing to do it as long as the return was appropriate.

-[If you become strong with the equipment, money comes in. It's an opportunity!]

-[I agree!]

-[If you go through body modification and use the battle shoot, you're a walking one-man army! An opportunity in Life Mission! Let's fly our employment worries to

Andromeda!]

-[I bought 50g of gold with 50 points. \$2,500 is in my hand!]

As this specific subject became discussed, the chat room's fervor rose. They acted in a frenzy as though they had earned everything with their inflated dreams.

"That's when you're still alive. As if everything will go their way."

Each mission was a matter of life and death. Cha Jun Sung lived freely, but the others had greed, ambition, and avarice.

-[If you look in the Medicine menu, they sold cancer inhibitors, growth promoters, and blood too!]

That was a bit surprising. Each item could provoke medical innovation.

Cha Jun Sung left the chat room to properly look through the store. Even if others did not explain it to him, it was easy to understand it as long as he had the PDA.

"Unbelievable. Do points use money to control all things?"

Money is what has decided everything until now. Now, that would become points. There was nothing they could not do as long as they had points.

"Do I need to go too...? If I don't go, that would mean these people would rise above me. I don't like that."

He was not undermining others, but the people who were below him would stand atop his Overload reputation if this continued.

He would rather die than lose. Odin's warning that he would not be able to live if he did not have power also stuck in his mind. He was muddled for various reasons.

"I can select between Level D and E missions. By difficulty, Level E has Level 1 and 2, D has Level 3 and 4 mutants. From Level 3, their strength and growth expand so I won't be able to even leave a scratch unless I'm properly armed."

He could tell through common sense. His pack and basic items were just 100 points.

Even with 5260 points, he would not be able to acquire the equipment necessary to complete a Level D mission. He would need many more points.

-[Body Modification]

Cha Jun Sung clicked on the list that would make it possible for him to take on a crowd of mutants. In the Level D store, there was surgery up to stage 2.

-[Gains from 1st stage body modification: 100,000 points]

-[Gains from 2nd stage body modification: 200,000 points]

Gain and probability were ensured until the 4th stage in the virtual version.

But the gain and probability fell from the 5th stage, and the character could die if the body modification failed. The character is deleted from the 9th stage onwards.

In a situation where people can evolve into superhumans, it had to be difficult.

Swipe.

Cha Jun Sung looked through the store for a few hours. There were a lot of curious things.

He did not get sick of it. He chose the optimal equipment he could get with his 5260 points. The Level D store was taken out of consideration, his points did not allow for it.

-[Low class impact tights: 1500 points]

-[Plastic armor: 1500 points]

-[Steel katana: 1000 points]

Impact tights fit the body closely and absorb external shock.

The 1cm thick special textile acted like a sponge. The disadvantage was that it was vulnerable to attacks of focused strength or sharp materials because of its low level.

The plastic armor is light, but high in elasticity and hard. If worn with the impact

tights, they covered each other's disadvantages.

The steel katana is a sword. It's power and cutting force were strong, so it was advantageous to have before a fray. It was a symbol of Cha Jun Sung's Overload and a weapon he was very familiar with.

"I'm gaining confidence."

This was the equipment he chose costing a total of 4000 points. If he were wearing these, he would be able to fight 21 Kawods with his eyes closed.

"I guess I'll need weapons? A pistol is a little weak, but a submachine gun is good."

-[Mp7 red fire: 500 points]

It was a good one. It had a fast burst speed and its penetration was significant.

It had the basic 8 magazines with 271 bullets... 30 rounds per magazine. He intended to leave 1 round loaded.

"I'll use the remaining 409 points on expendables. Food and medicine are important."

If he didn't eat, he would be exhausted even without moving. If he treated his wounds right away, he could prevent major injuries. It was a grave mistake to think that weapons are the only essential items.

"Perfect."

Cha Jun Sung praised himself as he looked at the item list. He had not wasted even 1 point. He had calculated the weight he could lift and efficiency as well.

"I can handle Level 1 with this equipment for sure, but I can also give Level 2 a try."

Level 1 could not get through the plastic armor and impact tights. It could if the damage accumulated, but he would not stay still.

Level 2 was dangerous to go up against right now, but the odds for a one-on-one fight were greater than 90% if he used the red fire and dagger before a struggle.

How did he know?

He was following the route he had gone through as a beginner again. He did not even think about Level 3 because there was a high possibility of dying from a single blow.

“Uh... What the hell am I thinking? What am I doing right now?”

Chapter 10

Cha Jun Sung came back to his senses. While we was getting he his equipment, he had forgotten that these were the actions of someone who was thinking about going back.

“Am I going?”

Thump.

His heart trembled. Because he was scared? It was that, but also... out of expectation? Excitement? It was like when he had first entered Life Mission 10 years ago.

“It’s only been a day since I said I wouldn’t go back, but I guess I won’t last another 3 days.”

He could not deny his instincts. His determination was weakening.

He wanted to go in the mission and get ahead of everyone else. He was actually ahead of everyone now. But only if he didn’t stop here.

“It’s too late to go to sleep now.”

The equipment that appeared as holograms looked at him and seduced him. They were more tempting than a naked woman. It became a night of worry.



“I don’t know!”

The equipment Cha Jun Sung had bought in the middle of the night were organized next to him.

The impact tights and plastic armor were okay, but he would be arrested if the red fire and steel katana were found.

It was all equipment that he had used when he started playing Life Mission.

“E-class mission list.”

-[Searching E-class missions. There are 35122 missions available.]

There were a variety of missions. They all had different goals and rewards.

The lowest were 300-400 points, but there were some that exceeded 1500. The highest in class E was 3000, but he had no intention on overdoing it from the beginning.

“Since there isn’t a limit on how many I can enter and leave, let’s start from the lowest and make our way up in order.”

He decided on starting with missions below 400 points. The 3 goals were annihilation, attainment, and escape. It was simple. Either kill everyone, do something, or run away.

“This looks good.”

-[E-class mission: Dwarves in the darkness] [Goal: Annihilation]

-[Scenario: Kill the dwarves that have passed the barricades and occupied a supermarket.] [Reward: 350 points]

Since it was class E, the scenario was as simple as the tutorial’s. There was not a lot of thought put into it. It would become more complicated as he went higher in class.

“There are a few more things I need to buy if I want to complete a real mission.”

He was short on points, so he could only complete a few E-class missions. He did not want to overdo it.

“Even if I want to collect more information on the missions, any more than this is too much.”

It had only been 2 days since the reality version started. Everyone was in a state where they had taken the first step. No one was in a position to teach someone else. Everyone was in the same situation.

“I’ll advance a step while everyone else is hesitating.”

Though it was a simple step now, soon it would become a distance that could not be shortened.



Wiing.

“Is that the place?”

-[3-floor supermarket]

Cha Jun Sung examined the sign. The writing was unfamiliar.

It looked like the language of a developing country. From the outside, it looked like a supermarket from one of Korea’s major companies. Judging by its size, it must have been large inside as well.

“If they’re Level 1 mutant dwarves that like the darkness, they must be gremlins.”

They are aggressive. Their darts are toxic.

As they are fairly strong, compared to other weak mutants, they enjoy hunting more than they act as cognate predators. Even level 2 mutants avoid gremlins who attack in hordes.

“I’ll start with the red fire and use the sword once I get used to battle.”

This is reality. He did not confuse it with the virtual version.

In the virtual version, he may have been the Overload that killed a Level 9 mutant, but in reality he was just an average person who exercised a bit. He would die if he overreached by excessively trusting his equipment.

“Should I wait until the morning?”

It was evening. He did not have any equipment for his vision, so everything was dark. Even if he got used to the dark, there was only so much he could do with human vision.

In the morning when it became lighter, he could check the market and its surrounding area.

Nod.

Cha Jun Sung decided to wait it out. There was nothing to lose in waiting.

Kiki!

He heard unpleasant laughter. It was like something was laughing at him.

“Ugh! They’ll be walking around because it’s nighttime, but I haven’t used the odorless spray.”

Gremlins were nocturnal. They would avoid the sun by staying inside the supermarket during the day, but they would come out at night to move around or hunt. He had forgotten.

Bang!

Chiik!

Cha Jun Sung searched through his pack and sprayed himself. He could not fool the ones who had already seen him, but it would be better to spray it even now. There! Let’s greet some customers.

“One gremlin?”

Seuk.

He could see a gremlin’s head by the building. Cha Jun Sung took his red fire with a silencer. It was around 30 meters away.

Pew!

Puk!

The gremlin was shot in the head, whether by luck or skill, and fell over. There was a bursting sound in the air, but it was not enough to cause trouble.

-[You have earned 12 points.]

“A gun really is good.”

It was easy. It died in a shot. He would be able to kill dozens.

Seuseuk.

Cha Jun Sung approached the gremlin. It was carrying a coarse but not dangerous weapon. It was the type that could be blocked with just his plastic armor.

As he searched the body, he found a dart and tried jabbing his impact tights with it. He had controlled the length so that it would not touch his skin even if it got through the fabric.

“It doesn’t go through.”

It did not go in no matter how much he pushed on it. It might go in if he pushed against it on a wall, but there was almost no risk of an external attack because that was unlikely to happen.

“I’ll still wait.”

Conceit becomes a trap, and the best decision is to go along with his plan. Nothing lost from being cautious.



Pewpewpewpew!

Changchangchangchang!

Every time he shot the red fire, a window of the dark supermarket shattered. He broke each one he saw mercilessly.

Hwak!

Kyak!

Rays of sunlight flooded in. Shrieks followed. The gremlins scrambled to find a dark place to hide from the light.

That was his chance. It seemed they were more averse to the sunlight than they were to intruders. The red fire chased their unprotected movement like a swarm of bees.

“There are a ton of them.”

He stopped counting after he killed over 100 of them.

He had swept the first three floors, and all that was left was the basement. It did not have windows, but that was okay. He had spent 50 points for a photothermal magazine.

Snap.

Cha Jun Sung switched the magazine. It was his last one. He had used them sparingly, but he still used 241 bullets. If he failed in the basement sweep, he would have to go into battle.

Sukuk.

He took the dagger out and slit the throats of the gremlins that were still alive. There might have been ones that were hiding, but he would check after finishing up with the basement.

Tubuktubuk.

Cha Jun Sung got on the escalator with the dagger in his left hand and the red fire in his right. He did not turn it on. He was just following its path.

He left the escalator and stopped walking. Dozens of pairs of eyes blinked at him from afar.

Cha Jun Sung sneered as he took out a round object from his chest.

The photothermal magazine would shine a tremendous light for five minutes. If this went off, it would be as though there was daylight in the basement.

Seuk.

Cha Jun Sung wore the glasses attached to his plastic armor. Its tinted lenses would protect his eyes from the photothermal magazine.

Bibibibi!

The timer was five seconds. If he did not throw it in time, it would detonate in front of him.

Pwak!

Kyah!

He closed his eyes because of the light that seeped through the tinted glasses. The eyes and skin of the gremlins who had been exposed to the photothermal magazine burned.

It was so painful that they died one after the other.

“If the missions under 400 points are all like this, I can do a bunch.”

It was advantageous to have more points. But rash behavior always proved to be ineffective.

The equipment he could carry was limited if he did not have 50,000 points to acquire the space compression bag. A lot of items interfered with his movement unnecessarily.

“I won’t get complacent, but from what I’ve felt... I’m embarrassed that I was so nervous.”

He knew that it was because of the equipment. Other than his exhaustion, he did not have any injuries. All that he had was a few scratches on the plastic armor.

Pewpew!

Cha Jun Sung used the red fire on a struggling gremlin and picked up the photothermal magazine. He could use it in a better way.

The photothermal magazine he had purchased was not to be thrown on the ground, but imprinted.

Swish.

Snap.

Cha Jun Sung threw the photothermal on the ceiling. A strong magnet came out of it and it attached itself to the structure. The interior of the basement became bright.

As the range of light widened, the darkness went away. The gremlins naturally fled into areas where the light was weak.

Kiik!

It was pathetic how they were struggling with each other to stay in the shadows.

“So you’re the leader.”

Deep in the darkness hid a gremlin about a half larger than the rest. The leader gremlin looked at Cha Jun Sung with malice.

“Goodnight.”

Pewpew!

Chapter 11

Cha Jun Sung put his gun down and hit each of the gremlins one by one. As a beginner for the first time in the virtual game, he had made a series of mistakes.

Unlike back then, he was currently being resourceful with his bullets since he would die if he did not have them when he needed them. For real. He had to maintain his reason at every moment.

Kyak!

Such as this very gremlin.

Too bad for them, Cha Jun Sung was a predator they could not approach easily.



It had been one month since Cha Jun Sung delved into Life Mission in reality.

From the dwarf mission, his level had gone up little by little. Even within E-class missions, the difficulty depended upon the reward points.

When the reward was under 1000 points, the only differences were in the number of Level 1 mutants and the area they were in. It all went smoothly up to here.

Even if they came charging at him in numbers, they would still just be deadwood in front of his red fire.

The problem began when the missions reached over 1000 points. This was when the Level 2 mutants appeared. Though they came one by one, they were not to be underestimated.

The Level 2 mutants would send their underlings first and the bullet consumption increased. They had recognized the dangerous object. The intent of their enemy was obvious, but they could not prevent it.

It was impossible to kill dozens of mutants at the same time. He had purchased a

generous amount of bullets because of this, but he used all of them up before he could fight with Level 2.

At times, they hid amongst their underlings and waited it out. They did not come at him openly. If they had charged at him without any thought, he would have been faced with a difficult situation.

What was fortunate was that most of the Level 2 battles were one-on-one. When the Level 2 minions were left over, there would not be more than 10 of them.

He stood his ground with his steel katana and sturdy armor.

In contrast to Level 1 mutants, each hit was stronger and damaged his plastic armor, but his impact tights still absorbed most of the shock.

Cha Jun Sung had proved that his equipment worked on Level 2 mutants.

As he accumulated experience, his intuition was revived. Grenades were a definite asset, and he began to use equipment like the Claymore with ease.

Though it was exhausting, he could not describe the pleasure he felt when he overcame all of the hardships and completed each mission. He felt alive every time.

He had gathered 80,000 points like this. The total was close to 110,000, but he had used some on repairing his equipment and buying expendables.

When he had completed a 1300 point mission to annihilate mutants, he had gained 5000 points. However, 30% of that would evaporate into thin air due to repair costs.

In the worst cases, there were times when 70% of what he earned disappeared. These were when his armor and tights had become so ragged that he had to replace them.

Ever since he reached missions over 1500 points, his equipment would come back as rags. It had already happened twice and it seemed like this time would become the third.



Tutututu!

Cha Jun Sung brandished his red fire. He just wanted one shot to hit.

He tried his best to hit his target, but it was not easy because it moved in a zigzag. Nothing worked, so he was just hoping for luck.

Kwang!

Huk!

Cha Jun Sung went flying a few meters at a hit to the chest. His already ragged shoulder patch shattered into debris.

Tutu!

Even while he was falling, he did not let go of the red fire. Roads were tough. He needed to stay alert so that the opponent would not undermine him.

Crunk!

Cha Jun Sung used his sword as a cane to stand up. His legs trembled. He took a deep breath and created a greater distance between himself and his approaching enemy.

Level 2 Mad Dog.

It was a crazy dog.

It was as large as a bear. Its tight muscles grotesquely shook between its veins as if it had been skinned.

It was as strong as it was large. But more than anything, it was fast.

“One is hard enough, but two!”

At first, he thought that there was just one. But while they fought, another one suddenly came in. He was unprotected, but he had turned his body and avoided being harmed.

Its biting strength was incredible, so his protective plastic patch was smashed.

After that, it was a ruckus. He fought as though he were rabid because he was in a situation where he was fighting one against two. He set off a grenade, brandished his gun, and swung his sword.

He somehow killed one, but the remaining Mad Dog's actions became careful. Could it be because its companion met its death?. He did not approach it without thought.

Pewpew

The Mad Dog followed the movement of his red fire.

The bullets' speed surpassed the speed of sound. With the Level 2 mutant's eyesight, they might not have been able to see the bullets coming, but they could anticipate their direction.

Papat!

The Mad Dog hid behind a wall he had knocked over while jumping to avoid the bullets. The bullets could not penetrate the wall and bounced off.

Snap!

"Ow!"

He swore automatically. He was out of bullets. He had brought 1000, but he had used half on the two Mad Dogs. And he had not even been able to kill both.

Seurung!

Cha Jun Sung took his sword. He was in a dangerous situation, but he did not feel threatened.

It was his 30th Level E mission. Though he had never suffered any fatal wounds, he had sustained comparable injuries. Even if his arms and legs got cut off, all he had to do was complete the mission.

Keurung!

The Mad Dog crept out when Cha Jun Sung held his sword. It knew. It was fully aware of what was and was not a threat to it.

“Come on! I’ll slice you up!”

Tatat!

Cha Jun Sung provoked the Mad Dog and made the first attack. Instead of swinging the sword, he jabbed with it as in fencing because it was easier to recover.

Shwish shwish!

Kwatuk!

The Mad Dog had dodged off to the side to find an opportunity to attack, and took the sword with its teeth. It shook the sword vigorously to try and get rid of Cha Jun Sung.

“I knew you would bite it.”

He had anticipated that it would try to incapacitate his sword, the only weapon he had after the red fire. He had not let it bite his sword on purpose, but he had waited for this moment.

Swish.

The last grenade fell near the Mad Dog’s rear.

“Blow up.”

Kwang!

The Mad Dog could not avoid it and received the grenade’s blast on his rear.

Right before it exploded, Cha Jun Sung threw the sword and jumped. There was only a small timing window and the distance was too short to avoid the blast, so he was hit.

Kwajijjik!

Fragments of the grenade penetrated his plastic armor and ripped his impact tights. His protective helmet and glasses shattered as well.

“Ugh... I won’t be able to save even a fourth of this.”

Cha Jun Sung laid down and complained. If he combined this mission’s reward with the mutants he had caught, he had earned around 6000 points.

If he thought about the equipment he would have to dispose of and the expendables he used, he had not earned as much as he had suffered.

“I can’t lower my expectations... I’ll have to start party play soon.”

500 points was enough for manual labor. But missions under Level 2 were not fun because they were just an average massacre.

Even while he was playing the tutorial, he had directed himself to the safe play. Once he made up his mind however, he could not hold back.

He needed to hurry up and gather points to pay for body modification procedures and Level D equipment. If he worked in a party, he might gain fewer points than if he were acting alone, but there was also less waste.

In addition, his exhaustion would be distributed to different members of the party.

“I’ll go back, receive treatment, and prepare for a 3000 point mission.”

There was really no reason for him to go back to the briefing room unless it was to use the healing capsule. Body modification. Once synthesis becomes possible, he would visit it often.

He returned home once the mission was complete. This was when he needed to start being on guard the most. Mutants were mutants, but the party needed to be composed of people he could fully trust.

Life Mission was a place where one could gain anything but it was also a space free from others and from conventional rules. He would need to watch his back at every moment.

Chapter 12

While Cha Jun Sung was busy with missions, a site called “Lifer World” went up. Its base was in English, but it could be translated into any language.

Lifers with a lot of imagination guessed that it was created in America. As time went by, the number of Lifers increased exponentially.

There is no such thing as a secret in this world – especially with the internet where rumors spread fast.

It did not matter whether or not it was created in America because no matter what, the reality version of Life Mission was growing its number of “players”.

Cha Jun Sung knew that there would be a rush between countries to identify Lifers within a few months.

The number of Lifers would become the measure of a nation’s power. It was inevitable.

“Let’s stay comfortable until then.”

Cha Jun Sung sat at his computer and looked through the Lifers’ notice board. It was a place to exchange information and trade points.

But that did not mean that hundreds of points were traded. Even one point could decide someone’s life – points were extremely valuable. So, most exchanges were done in one or two point increments, and the maximum was five.

The market rate of one point was the equivalent of \$70 to \$80.

It was better to just save them and buy weapons; it did not make sense to trade them.

“Class E.”

Hundreds of comments appeared and were erased from the information exchange board each day. 80% of it consisted of class E missions.

-[Writer: Anonymous]

-[Title: Level of Class E Missions]

-[Content: I am leaving this review after failing twice. The tutorial reward is around 150 points? I hope people will have some sense and buy the exit with 100 points. Anyway, if you complete this mission, you can buy a machine gun worth 500 points. But for a beginner to complete it alone? In reality, it's impossible to complete with a piece of iron unless you are in the Special Forces or an equivalent field. I met a team that I worked well with in the beginning, and we succeeded at five missions and failed two. Even with three people, we had five successes and two fails. Don't throw your lives away. Create parties.]

Mission fails meant death or giving up. In Class E, you could give up for 100 points. But as the difficulty increased, so did the amount of points you have to sacrifice to give up.

There were a lot of similar comments. The subject matter was also pretty much the same. They all recommended refraining from solo missions and changing to party missions.

"It is too hard to keep trying to move forward alone – especially when your life is on the line."

Cha Jun Sung was also in agreement. If he did not have the points he had earned in the special missions, he would have been suffering right now.

If he went into a Level 1 against 100 mutants holding just one dagger, it wouldn't have been a fight. It would have been suicide, plain and simple.

He could expect a safer hunt if he gave up the take-all and joined a group. While slowly moving up the ladder, equipment and points would follow. Though slower, it was better than dying.

'Heh... There's a Lifer who was able to break through 1000 points with a party.'

Click.

-[Writer: Anonymous]

-[Title: 1000 Point Boundary]

-[Content: I will say it briefly. Once you get past the boundary, Level 2 mutants appear. We each purchased the equipment that we wanted with the points we gathered over the past month and attempted the Class-E mission, 'Red Building'. The process went smoothly. But in the middle of the mission, the boss Krollion began to lead the dwarves to bother us. Fortunately, we were able to gather our strength and beat them, but it is definitely different than Level 1. Be careful.]

Krollion was a humanoid mutant standing at 2 meters. It was a problem if someone got caught in its grip because it had 5 to 6 times the muscular strength of a human. But its shortcoming was that it was ignorant.

Woong!

Cha Jun Sung turned on the PDA and looked through the Class E list. They were listed in order of points, and a few at 3000 points stuck out.

They were not just any Class E missions, but ones that allowed the player to advance to Class D.

Mission success meant a whole slew of points. But, as with every pro, there were cons. There was a high chance of Level 2s swarming out. For this type of mission, a party was absolutely necessary.

There weren't many of these missions available – just five. It seemed they were controlling the numbers. Cha Jun Sung chose the one that he liked best among them.

'Field of Meat'

Just by looking at the name, he could tell it would reek of blood. The title and scenario seemed much harder than the mission he had completed the day before yesterday, 'Our Mad Dog'.

'It doesn't mean I'll attempt a Level D if I get through this, but it can be a kind of reference point for me.'

One thing he knew though was he needed to avoid meeting a Level 3 before his 2nd body modification was complete. There was an order to everything! He needed to maintain this order if he wanted to live long.

'What should I do?'

It would take a long time for other Lifers to get to his level. But he needed to join a party.

Though he looked through the list, there was no party willing to try a 3000 point mission. It seemed like most groups took these out of the running because they were intimidated just by the number of points.

‘Isn’t there anyone willing to try? Well... at the same time, it’s not good to just go into any party. I have to be selective too. Shit.’

He needed to test out the people he would work with before going into ‘Field of Meat’.

1 plus 1 is 2.

Math is math. But when you added humans into the equation, you could potentially get a different result.

More people could mean easier battles... but the wrong person could also make things a whole lot worse.

“Odin, search for parties at the level of 1000 points in Korea.”

[6 parties have resulted. There are 2 in the Seoul region.]

One needed to write their qualifications in the application for parties. It was true of both the person who was adding people to a party and the person searching for a party.

“They’re all pretty much the same.”

The first party had 5 people, the second had 7. All they had was armor that barely protected their vitals and one weapon each.

-[Would you like to apply for the Kill-All team?]

“Yeah.”

-[You have applied for the team. Speaking with the team’s helper.]

Odin was familiar with Cha Jun Sung’s habits now. He did not need to talk too much.

Odin would do well if left on his own. During this time, Cha Jun Sung would check his equipment.

'What a waste. The body modification! Why does it have to be so damn expensive!'

He had gathered a total of 80,000 points. After the first modification, he had exactly 20,000 left. He wanted to try and stick it out without doing the mods, but his equipment had been ruined in Our Mad Dog.

Since he could not go around with a bare body with mutants abound, he changed his low class impact tights to high class, and got plastic armor made of strong plastic.

There was a vision sensor attached to his helmet. Night looked like day and he could detect enemies by body temperature.

In terms of equipment, he was ready to go at any time.

-[The conversation has ended.]

"What did he say?"

-[The leader of the Kill-All team cannot believe your qualifications.]

On party applications, qualifications can be played down but not up.

"So?"

-[He would like to meet you in person.]

"Picky. We'll meet in the mission anyway. Arrange an appointment."

-[Mission confirmed.]

Odin reserved a place to meet.

Cha Jun Sung hoped it would be a party that looked at the person rather than the points.

Chapter 13

Bang.

As the Devereaux's head was punctured, its flesh scattered. Cha Jun Sung, who was fighting hard, was disgusted and quickly jumped away.

Chiik.

The blood splattered to the ground. Level 2 Devereaux's blood had toxicity. There were many of them in sizes as large as bulls – and the blood splatter was proportionate to their size.

‘That asshole...’

Cha Jun Sung's gaze became sinister. This was intentional. He had said that he would fight alone, but the other guy had jumped in without any warning.

“Hell yea! That toad gave me 180 points just now!”

“Wow! That's a lot.”

“Nice! You should have like 3000 points now! Are you going to buy some equipment then?”

Three men were making a fuss out of nothing in the damp swampy area. Cha Jun Sung repressed the urge to throw a grenade at the idiots.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes.”

A young man approached him. It was the party leader in charge of the idiots. Cha Jun Sung shrugged indifferently. These assholes were useless.

Any party that he thought would be good already had full membership. Since people who matched well had joined together a long time ago, Cha Jun Sung had had nowhere

to join as a stranger.

He had finally found a party that had exceeded 1000 points in the past 15 days... and this was it.

“What do you think about coming on permanently? Hunting has become much more comfortable since Mr. Odin joined!”

Lifers did not ask names before they revealed them themselves. It was awkward to choose aliases, so they went with the names of their helpers.

“Sorry. I’ll be going now since the mission has been completed. Good luck.”

Cha Jun Sung swallowed the swears on the tip of his tongue and returned home.

He heard the word ‘wait’ as he unilaterally ended the conversation and headed back home, but he ignored it. He felt he would develop a cancer if he stayed any longer.

“Trash. The whole lot of them.”

Eudeuk.

He had fought the Devereaux alone on behalf of the injured people. He left the other three people as escorts to take care of the injured person, but one of them went and took his Devereaux kill in the end.

He did not want to use the word steal because it was a party, but the guy had done nothing until he stepped in at the end to take the bounty. And then what? They want me to join their team after that shit?

After the Kill-All team, he had already gone through fifteen. One party per day.

His first impression of each party wasn’t the best, but he figured he should try a mission with them first before making a decision. Nope. He was right. They were all trash.

They only looked at points and made it a priority over their friends and teammates. He knew he would have a lot of regrets if he fostered relationships with these kinds of people.

‘How is there not one normal person? In reality or in the virtual version.’

The game had the interesting power of making a perfectly normal person into a psychopath. Cha Jun Sung met all types of people while playing the virtual version.

There were people who were probably completely normal in reality, but turned into someone who should be placed into a mental hospital right away once they entered the game.

Life Mission’s reality version was very similar to the virtual version excluding the fact that they only had one life. And it seemed the crazy transferred right on over.

This game, both in virtual reality and in reality, seemed to attract the kind of people whose gut reactions to situations were immediately to do something less than wholesome.

-[Are you feeling okay?]

“All I want to do at this point is just save like crazy for a month and go through body modification to move on to Class D. But I’m going to go crazy because I can’t do it, okay?”

There was something he found out while talking to Odin not too long ago. The number of times he died in the virtual version. It was 3225 – a higher number compared to others.

Cha Jun Sung had only done solo plays. He learned as he confronted enemies beyond his capabilities. This was possible because it was the virtual version.

‘If I want to take on something like Caicus in Class C, even 10 lives are too few. If I don’t make friends, my strength will lack starting at Class E.’

They had to meet before they had deepened their ties. If it’s a Lifer who has advanced to Level D, won’t they have all of their bases covered already?

Then they become people looking for business partners that they need.

And if those partners become useless?

They endure it and leave.

It had to be now. This moment was the best time to find a team.

‘Let’s do one more today before folding.’

He did not experience fatigue because he was going into missions below his level. Even so, he did not want to remain annoyed, so he would only do one more for the day.

“Party, party.”

Cha Jun Sung murmured the word party as he searched through Life World.

There were a lot of ads, but many of the parties were preoccupied with aspects like bribes, how many mutants each person took care of, and points. Beginning like this would only end in disaster.

“Oh?”

-[Writer: Anonymous]

-[Title: Permanent Party]

-[Content: If you’re going to say some nonsense about point bribes or mutant distribution, press escape. Solo missions are possible for me up to 500 points. I am only looking for comrades I can trust until the end. If you lie to get in and get caught, you’re dead.]

These words instantly captured Cha Jun Sung’s attention. The content matched his thoughts exactly. Is it someone else who finds importance in loyalty? Anyway, it was refreshing to read.

“Odin, search Underpass and send a party application.”

-[Searching mission ‘Underpass’. Search complete. I have sent a party application.]

It said that he was bringing people in on a first-come, first-serve basis. He was not sure if it would be good, but the ad was definitely different from what he had seen until now. He had high expectations.

-[The individual has accepted the party application.]

-[On standby... If you agree, you will be sent to Class E mission 'Underpass']

Of course he agreed. He wanted to see the party leader's face as soon as possible.

He was sick of dead ends.

'If there is a God, have pity and bring me a winner.'



"Hello, I am party leader, Zephyrus. It's nice to meet you."

"Oh, I'm Odin."

Cha Jun Sung lowered his head in surprise. It was in greeting but also because of the person's short height.

18? 19? He did not look like a middle schooler. Probably a high school student.

Whatever he was, he was not an adult. He was a pretty looking boy. Maybe because of that, the manly aura he had felt from the post disappeared.

"Are you disappointed because I'm young?"

"I can't say I'm disappointed because age has nothing to do with skill... but I'm surprised that a young person came into a place like this."

The primary selection criteria had been Life Mission account holders. It was an adult game, but some high school students entered by adjusting their birth dates.

"I'm going to catch all of the mutants in this mission, but I figure you won't care?"

"Excuse me?"

"This is my 10th time completing Underpass, so I know this place well."

Cha Jun Sung thought he had heard wrong. 10th time? Did that mean this was a repeat mission? He assumed missions could only be completed once. He learned something

new today.

If Zephyrus was not lying, he would know Underpass like the back of his hand.

“It seems you didn’t know. Well, I guess no one would just tell you great information like this.”

Zephyrus scanned Cha Jun Sung. He observed carefully as though examining an object. It was not uncomfortable. Rather, he was curious on what words would follow.

“Your equipment is outstanding. I’ve seen hundreds of Lifers, but no one else even comes close.”

“Thank you.”

“Even if you get lost, it looks like you wouldn’t die.”

“Die?”

“This place is Class E, but it’s dangerous. I gained a lot of information while basically living here. I’m sure you have information that others don’t as well? That type of equipment is impossible to get with normal methods.”

Cha Jun Sung’s eyes rounded. Not only was Zephyrus not surprised at his equipment, he even showed some intelligent thinking.

“Even when I think about it, I was lucky.”

“I see.”

He admitted it. Caicus’ appearance to make a special mission was all luck. Though it could have been unlucky if something had gone slightly wrong.

“Can I ask an uncomfortable question?”

“Sure.”

“It seems like you do missions solo too, but how far have you gone?”

“To 1500 points, but I wouldn’t suggest it because it’s inefficient.”

“Wow!”

Zephyrus who had remained calm at Cha Jun Sung’s equipment showed surprise. He was thinking that someone great had come in.

“Let’s do the mission first.”

“Oh right!”

Chapter 14

Zephyrus hit his own head. He was being stupid. He said that he would catch everything himself but had forgotten about the mission while lost in this conversation.

Zephyrus put the rectangular case in his left hand and plastic box in his right on the floor. His attire was exceedingly casual.

‘He doesn’t have any accoutrements. Is this a state of relaxation from this being his 10th completion? I’ll see how he does.’

It seemed the case was his weapon. All he wore were low class tights and partial protectors. He appeared to have gathered a fair amount of points.

‘His equipment is weak. From the way he speaks, he isn’t the type to waste his points. Either he gathered them or... had he used all of them on that case?’

The case opened. Inside was a 3-level stair-like structure.

Each level was immaculately organized with 3 components. They were separated into parts – crossbow, sniper rifle, a variety of bombs.

‘Terrorist? Sniper?’

Terrorist bomber.

Sniper shooter.

Cha Jun Sung thought Zephyrus’ job to be one of those two. It couldn’t be both because that would be inefficient.

Cha Jun Sung thought of the blader job.

With the virtual version’s qualifications, he would need millions of points. He could not waste points in this situation. Other Lifers were the same. They needed to choose one thing and focus all their points on that. It didn’t do to spread your points thin.

He was extremely quick in putting the crossbow together. It was not an ordinary crossbow. It was an automatic crossbow capable of firing 20 shots.

"I finally bought this."

Zephyrus admired it when he finished its assembly, as he pulled the sniper rifle out.

Cha Jun Sung's gaze went to the sniper rifle. He had seen it in the store while looking at firearms. He could remember it being worth more than 3000 points.

It was shorter than a normal sniper rifle. It was a semi-automatic sniper rifle.

"This is a set item. I used 20,000 points to buy it."

"Ho ho."

Cha Jun Sun laughed in disbelief. 20,000 for a case and a few weapons? It was ridiculously expensive, but there must have been a reason why Zephyrus bought it.

"If you buy this case, every day you automatically get 10 arrows, 50 bullets, and 2 bombs of your choice. There's a benefit in the long term."

That meant he saved the cost of daily ammunition for low level missions.

"Wait here."

Tatat!

Zephyrus took the crossbow and box and went forward 20 meters. They were in the sewers, but there was no problem with vision because light seeped in from many places.

'What is he trying to do?'

Cha Jun Sung observed Zephyrus. His hunting method was the opposite of his.

It seems like he uses his head to hunt rather than his body? His profession leaned toward the sniper side. A terrorist is called a life destroyer.

Zephyrus had a fever bomb in his hand.

He then opened his box and took something else out. It was raw meat dripping with bright red blood. It was a fever shot.

“These guys go crazy over blood. After a minute, they’ll come in hordes.”

“It’s a double-edged sword.”

“Exactly.”

He did not go around killing them, but instead made them all gather in one place. If something went wrong, it could turn into a concentrated attack instead of a lure.

Their shadows appeared first because of the angle of the light. The mutants were not walking towards them, but crawling. They wriggled like maggots. Their number was unclear.

“Blood-sucking insects?”

“The mission is complete once you catch about 150 of them.”

A white lump the size of a human head with hair growing out of it was crawling.

It was impossible to differentiate between the head and the rear. A strange liquid was dripping from the hair. Paralysis toxin. He was certain it was a blood-sucking insect.

‘Could it be?’

Cha Jun Sung quickly looked around him. Blood-sucking insects were scary. They became stronger as they matured. The ones in front of them were just newborn babies.

One could not underestimate them just because they were babies, however. They were still among the top five strongest in Level 1. Though they seemed slow, they became as fast as lightning once they detected food.

“The evil blood-suckers aren’t here.”

“Have you seen the evil blood-suckers? How far is their home?”

“You don’t have to worry about them as long as you don’t go too far in.”

Zephyrus' explanation was succinct. It was a silent indication that he would not say more.

Cha Jun Sung believed that the information this boy had said he earned from this place, the Underpass, had to do with his approach to the blood-sucking insects. Whatever it was.

His eyes squinted. The fact that evil blood-suckers were here meant that there were creatures of a higher level. Just an evil blood-sucker alone was Level 3. Getting caught meant death.

They could only abandon the mission with a bow. He could not understand what kind of place this was. Judging by the forages, it seemed to be linked to a special mission like the Closed Area mission.

Slurp slurp.

The blood-sucking insects had attached themselves to the raw meat and began sucking the blood. Some took pieces of it and chewed. It was grotesque.

A rough guess was that there were 35 to 40 of them. Zephyrus waited until they gathered, press the button on the fever bomb, and threw it into the center of the insects.

Puak!

Kiak!

As the fever bomb went off, the blood-sucking insects melted. Smoke filled the underpass. The cost of the bombs was high, but this much was worth it.

"I got like this after playing Life Mission for half a year. How about you, Odin?"

"It's been 10 years since I started with the beta. I know the blood-sucking insects well. Can we speak a little after the mission is over? Or should I say to exchange information?"

"We'll see."

Zephyrus pretended to be indifferent, but showed a positive attitude. He would have

turned down the offer if Cha Jun Sung had just been asking for information, but he was interested in an exchange.

Click.

Zephyrus stood in position with his sniper rifle and waited for the blood-sucking insects to re-emerge. He had no anxiety. There was a sense of calm in his actions.

Kiki!

Immature blood-sucking insects only have a developed sense of smell, and the rest of their senses were degenerate. The reason why he lured them as a strategy was for the advantage of the terrain.

He meant to fight without worrying about other variables. They came out as long as there was an odor. Going around finding them one by one was unnecessary in many ways.

Kwajik.

The blood-sucking insects that had appeared in hordes ate the burnt pieces. Their sizes expanded as they ate.

If one became as big as a person, it would advance to a Level 3 evil blood-sucker.

Tang!

Zephyrus' sniper rifle hit a blood-sucking insect. That was when he showed the power of a semi-automatic. Even while the blood-sucking insects were being attacked, they focused on eating.

Tatatatang!

He shot and shot. Zephyrus did not use a grenade. He only focused on the distant enemies with his eye on the scope. He had great aim.

He might have shot for too long, because the blood-sucking insects reacted to the smell of gunpowder. They could differentiate between smells coming from near and far.

Kiak!

The insects that had been busy eating the meat began screaming in Zephyrus' direction. They were poised for attack, recognizing an enemy.

They went from the speed of a person walking to almost a run.

Dozens of muckworms came in like a wave. It was truly detestable. Some rode the walls and some the ceiling. Their attention was dispersed in all directions.

"We'll kill them as we escape."

"Okay."

Tangtang.

Each time Zephyrus took a step back, an insect died. Even disregarding his age, he had amazing skill.

"Careful!"

Cha Jun Sung held his red fire in a desperate gesture. The insects riding the walls sprang off with their teeth bared.

The distance was not more than a few meters. Within seconds, one was right in front of Zephyrus' face.

Puk!

A surprising incident arose. Zephyrus took out his crossbow and fired at the insect. The arrow pierced through its mouth and hit the ceiling, breaking in half.

He kicked the dead insect and continued on.

"Ha..."

Cha Jun Sung was truly in awe. Even if this was Zephyrus's 10th time in the mission, his performance could not be attributed to a familiarity with the mutants and terrain alone.

That was talent. He did not yet know a lot about Zephyrus, but he was showing great talent as a sniper.

-[Congratulations. You have cleared Class E mission 'Underpass']

-[You have earned 500 points.]

At some point, they had reached completion of the mission. He had received a free 500 points just while observing.

Other Lifers would have asked for a distribution of the points instead of a sweep, but Cha Jun Sung was honestly at peace. He did not care if they did this a few more times.

"You said you wanted to talk? Since it's a hassle to speak through our helpers or outside, follow me. We have to move quickly."

Zephyrus rushed to gather his equipment and directed Cha Jun Sung. He went along obediently since it did not seem like Zephyrus had bad intentions.

Chapter 15

“What is this place?”

“I found it by chance while I was running away. There are a few other places too.”

The place where Zephyrus had led him was a bunker that could fit around 10 people. There were things like food and supplies in random places.

He said that they were not purchased, but already here when he first found it. Items found on a mission can be used. They cannot forget that it is reality.

“Odin, you passed the interview.”

“Interview?”

Cha Jun Sung tipped his head in puzzlement. It sounded like Zephyrus had decided on some benchmarks and tested him. Zephyrus relieved his curiosity.

“I saw 3 things.”

He then explained.

First, he did not underestimate him because he was young.

Second, he allowed him to take on all of the mutants.

Third, he was the same until the very end.

He was young, but he had his own standards. He could be seen as very thoughtful.

“Are those three criteria hard to fulfill?”

“I tried out a lot of parties, but there weren’t many who even passed the first.”

Countless times, he had heard laughter of disbelief at first sight or the words that a minor should not be leaving prank comments online. They did not see him as a Lifer.

“The second was to see which side you considered important.”

It had not mattered that he used harsh words in his post to try to filter out the garbage. The people who came in were all the same.

However, he had not given up. He had the belief that a good person would come in at some point. Someone like Cha Jun Sung who was still looking for a party even after experiencing the bitter aspects of it.

“Until now, there were 3 other people who had passed the second point. But they were busy shooting their guns when the blood-sucking insects came swarming in.”

This he could understand. Blood-sucking insects needed to be eliminated early on. Those people must not have trusted Zephyrus’ skills.

Cha Jun Sung himself could not guarantee that he would not have done the same if he had not trusted Zephyrus. That was how dangerous the insects were.

“Since I passed the interview, is it time to earn trust?”

“Of course.”

Cha Jun Sung thought Zephyrus was cute. Though he did not act young, he was.

Looking at him as one Lifer to another however, his skill and personality was one to be admired. Age cannot become a determining standard of evaluation.

“What can I say to gain that trust? Information that only I know?”

Cha Jun Sung spoke casually. He did not have any intentions on surprising him.

Zephyrus was someone he wanted to make into a comrade, but he did not want to be at a disadvantage. Since he did not seem like he would speak first, he would have to tell him in the pretense that he had been fooled.

“I’m sure you know that Level 2 mutants appear when it’s 1000 points?”

“I saw that on Lifer World.”

“From 1500 points, 2 come out. I think there were about 400 Level 1 mutants?”

Cha Jun Sung continued to explain that because they were smart, they recognized objects that were a danger to them and hid while ordering the dwarves around.

Zephyrus asked questions as he listened. The difference between reading about it and listening to someone who had experience speak was that of theory and encounter.

Then Cha Jun Sung said the most important thing.

“Acting alone instead of as a party will make it difficult to reach over 1000 points. Even if you are the best out of 100, you’re nothing when facing numbers.”

Whew.

Zephyrus sighed. There was no disputing it. That was the reason why he did not move over to another mission.

He had spent everything on the case, but his goal was to get points from Underpass and buy the best equipment from the Class E store. He estimated it would take a month.

“While we’re on it, I’ll tell you one more thing. I earned 5260 points in the tutorial. That became the foundation for this equipment.”

“A special mission?”

“I guess that’s what is linked to the reason why we need to move quickly. If you stay in one place for a while, the evil blood-sucker could appear or there could be another format...”

Zephyrus was shocked. He looked like he had seen a ghost. He muttered,

“Oh, how did you know that...!”

“Knowing the term special mission means you’ve already gone through it and... looking at your behavior upon entering Underpass, I can assume.”

Cha Jun Sung had not only looked at Zephyrus’ skills. He had kept Zephyrus’ words and defensive behavior in mind.

It might be difficult to put something together with one piece, but a profile can be

made out after gathering pieces. It was like a puzzle.

“With this much, I believe you have something to say as well.”

Talking alone defied the courtesies of give-and-take. Since he taught Zephyrus something he did not know, Zephyrus also needed to hand over information.

“I only know what I learned through Underpass.”

Seuk.

Cha Jun Sung gestured to him to continue as he did not care about such things.

The listener is to decide if the information is useful or not. Even if it is useless, he liked Zephyrus. He would be satisfied with becoming comrades.

“Exactly 12 days ago, I came into Underpass in a 6-person party.”

He was rewinding his memory.

Zephyrus recalled when he first stepped into Underpass 12 days ago.



Zephyrus' first party. It is also the only party that was annihilated.

Their reason for choosing Underpass was nothing special. It stood out while they were looking for 500-point missions. To put it simply, they were just looking for something that would pay.

The start was smooth. Since they were all experienced in Life Mission, they knew what they needed to be careful of while facing the blood-sucking insects.

Since there were 6 of them and they were all fairly skilled, they completed the mission without much problem.

Then, one of the party members suggested looking around the underpass just for fun instead of heading back.

The party had delightfully agreed. It was a Class E mission anyway. Blood-sucking

insects did not pose much of a danger. This was why the party was wiped out.

“Had you not heard an explanation on the overall difficulty from your helper?”

“...We had heard it, but didn’t know how exactly it would apply.”

Tsk.

Cha Jun Sung had a bitter expression. The information from helpers were basic, but you could avoid a meaningless death by following their instructions. They had overlooked that.

It was difficult to survive while taking caution of only what was visible. The chance of survival was higher when being careful of something that could not be seen to the eye than what could.

Zephyrus’ party had ignored this and crossed a river they could not return from.

He could empathize on the one hand. He had listened to Odin, but he would not have understood the importance of it if he had not experienced Caicus.

“As we went along the path in the Underpass, we came upon the evil blood-sucker’s home and the mission went from Class E to Class D.”

Siksik.

They had heard a sound come from a hole they saw in an alley they were passing.

They thought that it was the sound of wind passing through, but threw a grenade into it just in case, opening the door to hell themselves.

“2 evil blood-suckers who were guarding hundreds of cocoons came out.”

Evil blood-suckers were Level 3. They were the final evolution of blood-sucking insects. They were repulsive because they looked like a cross between an earthworm and centipede.

Its nature was as atrocious as its appearance – it was cruel. It enjoyed stabbing its opponent to death with its spikes or wrapping itself around the opponent to cut it up.

It showed its strength as a Level 3 mutant through its fast speed and unexpected movement. But 2 evil blood-suckers came out? That was bound to be a disaster.

“Was giving up the mission not an option?”

“We were forced. We could have if we had not been discovered by the evil blood-suckers, but we weren’t given the option once they had already seen us.”

“So you couldn’t force a return.”

“No.”

Lifers’ forced returns were only possible if they did not move from the spot they were in.

When he asked Odin about the principles, Odin had said that the location needed to return switches if someone moves, so they cannot calculate it in real time.

The time it takes to calculate the return was 5 to 6 seconds. But to stay still for that time while an evil blood-sucker was approaching meant that they were flirting with death.

“Even if you shoot your gun and somehow hit it, you can’t wound it very much.”

“Maybe...”

“All our party members had were pistols and simple SMGs.”

Ugh.

Cha Jun Sung let out a sick sound. He pitied Zephyrus who had witnessed the deaths of all of his first party members. The flesh of the evil blood-sucker was thick and tough.

It would be hard to penetrate even with his red fire. For penetration, stronger firearm was necessary. Zephyrus’ sniper rifle was just barely suitable.

“2 people died like that and 4 people including me, ran away.”

“You can’t show your back.”

“There was nothing we could do because our options were dying or running away.”

Blood-sucking insects only had a developed sense of smell. But the evil blood-sucker had a variety of the five senses. They were natural hunters. It did not let go of any prey it targeted.

“Each person was hunted. That was the first time I heard screaming like that.”

When emotions were mixed in, screaming sounded different. It was hair-raising.

Eventually they reached a different place as they ran away. Fortunately, one comrade also survived, but he was out of his mind after witnessing 4 people die.

“That’s when you discovered this bunker?”

“No. It was a different one.”

“The other person...”

“The way to get into each bunker is different.”

The bunker they were currently in could be entered by opening the door. The bunker Zephyrus was talking about was another place where they needed to open the top door as if it were a tank and go down into it.

“I was faster because I had discovered it, and he was following behind me.”

“So he got dragged out.”

“The entry was so narrow that they could not kill me without dragging him out. In that time, I was able to crawl into the bunker, and I lived.”

Zephyrus’ face turned dark. He was feeling guilt. To him, it was as though he had sacrificed a comrade for his own survival.

“I would like to say something, but can you listen to it as though it was coming from an adult?”

“I’ll listen.”

“You cannot be free from death the second you enter this place. But if you become involved in another’s death, only think about one thing.”

“What is that?”

“Whether it was intentional or not.”

“That’s hard.”

“I’ll solve it for you. Did you kill that man to live?”

“Never!”

Zephyrus denied it vehemently. You couldn’t automatically say he was pure just because he was young, but he was also clearly not someone who would kill another to stay alive.

“That’s it. If you didn’t make it happen, it was that person’s fate to die there. And it was your fate to live.”

Chapter 16

The deepest hideout in the underpass – it was built as a bunker in case of emergency situations, but it had been a long time since it was used for those purposes.

A place with plenty of space for tens of thousands of people was bustling with blood-sucking insects.

To use military terms, this was their headquarters. The habitat that Zephyrus had discovered was a small camp of the evil blood-suckers.

Seuseuk.

As they got closer to the center, higher levels appeared. There was a clear order.

The weaker ones were gathered on the outside, but the stronger ones had constantly dug in to get to the center. Something was brewing.

Kyarung!

A stifled cry as if something was caught in the throat. As soon as the sound was heard, it became quiet.

As a thorn the size of a human arm scratched the hard concrete, 5 demon blood-suckers a few times the size of the evil blood-suckers raised their heads.

Demon blood-suckers controlled the incoming insects and drew a circle.

It was to protect the giant cocoon behind them. The cocoon was large enough for all 5 of the demon blood-suckers to fit in.

The top of the cocoon cracked. Something inside was trying to get out.

The demon blood-suckers and insects moved as if they were having seizures. It was like looking at fanatics enshrining a pseudo-Sheikh. It was about half larger than the normal demon blood-sucker. It was an elder to the insects.

Kiik!

They could not describe the despair they felt when they lost their king in a losing war. Fortunately, the king left an heir and the heir was about to be born.

-[We are not yet finished. Worship his return.]

This was what they would have said if the demon blood-suckers' thoughts were translated into human language.

Kwakwang!

The cocoon could not withstand the power being exerted from inside and a hole formed. The creature that sprang out of it surged towards the ceiling.

Woowoowoowoo!

There was a mighty power in its roar.

This was when Cha Jun Sung had passed out. This was the type of mental collapse that a Level 7 mutant could invoke.

Keukeukeukeuk.

The ceiling was cracking. It had been split by a thorn sharper than a knife.

As it was in the basement, the concrete's thickness was unimaginable – but the mutant had pierced it.

It was easily 100m from its head to its tail, and 10m in diameter.

Other than the cone-shaped thorn, the underground creature also had blades attached to it. The thorn was larger than a person.

It looked similar to the demon blood-suckers but the underground creature was more fit for destruction. Its color was a harmony of blue, red, and black.

The blood-sucking insect's 3rd form of evolution.

The blood-sucking lords took one spot in the 36 nightmares.

Seuk.

The blood-sucking lord looked down. The things that gathered. They were weak and insignificant, but he could tell that they were a fellow species.

Kiah!

The blood-sucking insects howled. The king they had so waited for had been born.

How could they express this happiness?

They were ready to avenge the sorrow they felt in the past under the new king's command.



Mental collapse.

It was the mind control used when high level mutants wanted lower creatures to submit. This concept of lower creatures included humans.

3 years ago in Life Mission, a Level 8 mutant was let loose in a big city.

Outbreak event? That was the basic objective. At the time, Lifers below the 5th stage of body modifications in a 500m radius passed out.

Cha Jun Sung survived the mental collapse and caught the mutant with other Lifers.

Level 8 was that fearsome. He recognized the same noise in the Underpass before passing out. But Underpass was only supposed to be a Class E. What was going on?

"How could it be a blood-sucking lord. Even I've only caught one before because they're so hard to find."

Disaster and nightmare.

It was the way to refer to Level 9 and Level 8 mutants. Blood-sucking lords were a Level 8 mutant.

Its ability to exert its power was real. In the virtual version, it destroyed a 10-floor

building that Cha Jun Sung was hiding in with a flick of its tail.

He had meant to surprise it, but could not fool its sensitive senses.

‘This is incredible information. It’s information that brings value just by having it!’

Lifers advance through missions. He was struggling with Class E right now, but it was obvious that he would soon pass Class D to go on to C and B.

There were missions until Class S. The blood-sucking lord’s strength was estimated at Level A.

It was unthinkable at the moment, but as it became a goal to seek without rest, it would become the grounds to cross over to Level S.

‘Keep the goal big. We advance one step at a time, but I must be ever prepared. And knowledge is key.’

He did not care about the boundary between the virtual and real. As long as he had made up his mind, he would become the best in reality as he had been in the virtual version. Overload does not change just because it was now in reality.

Kiak!

The Great Spider, whose body was cut off, fell over. Cha Jun Sung blew at the heat coming out of the red fire. This signified mission completion as he had caught the last one.

“Jin Hyuk, come here.”

“Okay.”

Cha Jun Sung called Zephyrus, Park Jin Hyuk. 10 days ago after the Underpass mission, Park Jin Hyuk had contacted him immediately upon his return.

They made plans the next day and entered a mission where they formally introduced themselves.

Park Jin Hyuk was young. He was now 19 years old. He had earned his GED for school. Cha Jun Sung didn't see it as a problem because this was not a day and age where schooling meant everything as it had in the past.

"With today, you'll be getting all Class E equipment?"

"It's close but it should be. It's all because of you. Thank you."

Bow.

Park Jin Hyuk bowed politely. In 10 days, they raised 30,000 points.

They had initially planned to get there in a month, but they had done it 20 days faster. A lot of it was thanks to Cha Jun Sung and his experience.

Underpass, which had been Park Jin Hyuk's reliable mission, became the one to avoid.

The blood-sucking lord was there. It was a given to avoid it in their right mind. They had to have at least the 7th body modification and the battle shoot to try it. But at least they knew to avoid it. Valuable information indeed.

"To commemorate becoming comrades, I'll tell you something."

"What is it?"

"I said I completed a Level D special mission, right? Class D store has something important."

Park Jin Hyuk thought about it. Cha Jun Sung would not have told him this for no reason. Cha Jun Sung was curious to see if Jin Hyuk would be able to read what he was thinking.

"What's in the Class D store?"

"Body modification."

Park Jin Hyuk's eyes rounded. He had not played Life Mission for long, but he knew the importance of body modifications. It was absolutely necessary for Lifers.

He had not been able to find it anywhere in Class E, but it was hiding in Class D?

“Are you saying we should attempt a Level D mission? I don’t have it in my list.”

“Think outside the box.”

He was at an age where he had a questioning and curious nature. They were discussing Level D mission and store right now. It must be related.

“I think I know what is it.”

“What are you thinking?”

“Special mission!”

“Right. I’m thinking of giving that mission a try. There’s nothing left to do in Level E. It’ll take half a year to buy Level D equipment with the points we earn here.”

Each level had its own wall. If he could not break through it, he could not advance.

Cha Jun Sung was at an advantage over Park Jin Hyuk because he completed a Level D mission. If he invested 1 year, he could freely advance to Level D missions.

On the other hand, Park Jin Hyuk was a Level E. Unless he attempted a Level D mission, he would stay at Level E even if he gathered hundreds of thousands of points. Cha Jun Sung was asking if he will take the challenge. No reward without risk.

“My guess is that if we get it, the Level D mission will open. Granted, mine is already open.”

“Will it be okay with the two of us?”

“No.”

Cha Jun Sung revealed his negative thoughts. It was 3000 points at least. He did not know what type of mission the upgrade mission was. But it was dangerous for just two to go in.

“There are more 1000 point parties. I’m sure we’ll find someone soon.”

Chapter 17

“Party... Will there be normal people?”

“We’ll see.”

Though they might seem fine on the outside, people were mazes inside.

The world inside a mission had no law or order. Even if someone committed a crime, they could not put them on trial. When people are put in extreme situations, they turn into devils.

“I’m not forcing you to do it.”

“I’ll try it. I got this far in Level E missions with just my body. The advance mission shouldn’t be so bad since I’ve got good equipment and you.”

Park Jin Hyuk made up his mind. If he changed his equipment, he would have the confidence to take on 1000-point missions alone. With Cha Jun Sung on top of that, he was not scared.

“That’s impressive.”

Cha Jun Sung knew that he would do it and patted his shoulder. They had become quite close in a matter of 10 days. If compatible, time didn’t matter.

“It’s for me. I’m sure you’re the same, but I hate losing.”

“Except in studying.”

“Ha ha! Right. Except in studying.”

Kikik!

They checked each other’s thoughts. All they had left was to wait until the D-day.

If they gave up a mission, it would become congested. Lifers were growing by the day.

If they stayed still, the Lifers would catch up to them and then they would be left behind.

“How many points go into body modification?”

“300,000 for the 2nd stage and 100,000 for the first stage.”

Ahem.

Park Jin Hyuk coughed. 300,000 points! It was easy to say 300,000, but it was dark. It would take them months.

“I gathered 100,000 so I can do the first stage.”

“You’ve gathered 100,000 already? Jackpot! So I guess you’ll do the 1st stage of body modifications?”

“Yeah. I’m going to go do it today.”

“The advance mission after a body modification? It’ll be easier than we thought.”

He wished it could be like that, but Cha Jun Sung knew that it would not be as easy as they were thinking.

Level 1 was fine. But if Level 2 mutants came out in hordes, he would not be able to handle it.

1 or 2 mutants between the two of them was just right. Even with body modification, 3 or 4 mutants would be all. He was not going to become unbelievably strong.

“From now on, let’s observe Lifers’ dynamics instead of gathering points.”

“Okay.”

Now they would lower the number of missions and search for a party to go into the advance mission with. The maximum number of people they could enter with for a mission in Class E is 10.

The day that number is filled would become the day they go into the advance mission.



After Cha Jun Sung left Park Jin Hyuk, he did not return to the real world. He needs to go through body modification. He went into the briefing room for the first time in a long while.

“100,000 points.”

Gulp.

He swallowed as he saw the number of points he had accumulated come up on the PDA screen.

It was the result of suffering for two months. With this, he could purchase the one or two of the best equipment in the Level D store.

The list of things he wanted to buy was endless, but he had already made up his mind.

“Body modification.”

He needed to rely on personal skill rather than equipment. In that end, body modification is a necessary course for Lifers to strengthen their bodies.

No matter how great the equipment was, he could not use it properly if his body was garbage. If the foundation was weak, it was just a sand castle that will be blown over in the wind.

“Odin, prepare it.”

-[Once you accept it, you cannot overturn it. Shall I set the body modification?]

“Yeah.”

-[Setting, setting complete. 100,000 points will be deducted.]

Cha Jun Sung’s points fell to 100. He went into the body modification room slowly. It was simple. A cylindrical object in a transparent material closed around him.

It was similar to the body modification room in the virtual version. He did not see any terror-inducing instruments. There were only tubes to eject liquid.

Seureuk.

Cha Jun Sung took off the equipment he had been wearing. Body modification was not a raw surgery where his flesh was opened to tamper with his bones, muscles, and organs.

It was instead injected with transcendental cells that transformed people into superhumans.

“This is nerve-wracking.”

-[You do not have to worry as there are no side effects until the 4th stage.]

“How about the 5th?”

-[I will tell you then.]

“Stingy.”

Wiing.

Cha Jun Sung pressed the switch on the cylinder. The clear entrance opened. This is the first time he is doing it in real life, but he already knew what was going to happen.

Since he knew, Odin did not offer a separate explanation. He did well on his own. There was no reason to tell him what to do.

-[Take a deep nap.]

A thick reddish liquid came down the hose and filled the cylinder, swallowing Cha Jun Sung. It must've allowed him to breathe though because he quickly fell asleep.

Though there was nothing like an oxygen tank, he did not choke but breathed normally. The cylinder's shape was simple, but it contained the technology of a secondary science.

Bibik!

A hologram appeared on the face of the cylinder that listed Cha Jun Sung's condition.

-[1st stage of body modification operation. Time 3 hours. Heart, pulse, blood pressure normal.]

The probability of success is 100%, but Odin did not neglect his duties. He did not miss any of the changes arising in Cha Jun Sung and checked each.

-[Congratulations on taking a step, however small, into the world of being a superhuman.]

Though his physical ability had barely doubled, he was definitely on the path to becoming a superhuman. When he woke up, the world would be different.



Seureuk.

His eyelids quivered as he opened his eyes. He saw a familiar wall. It had felt like a moment, but he had returned from the briefing room and was home.

‘I’m naked.’

Cha Jun Sung got up from his bed. He was still in his undressed state. His equipment was organized on one side of the room. Odin had sent it to him because he could not wear it.

Tak.

Since he woke up at home, his body was activated. He could feel a power that he did not normally have. When he looked in the full length mirror, he could see the new muscles that had developed everywhere wriggle.

He swung his fist.

Was it fast?

Honestly, he could not tell. It was difficult to determine because body modification was not just in muscular strength, but also in fortifying strength and the senses.

Cha Jun Sung went up to the 2nd floor in a comfortable training suit. It was a gym rivaling a professional health center.

It was just for 1 person, so there was just one of each machine but this would be enough to tell him how much he had changed basically.

‘You need to know yourself well. Being drunk on power is stupid.’

He started exercising after a little stretching. He did not overexert himself from the beginning. He set everything to the strength he had done before the body modification.

10 minutes passed. He put the dumbbell down. 10kg did not feel very heavy. The heaviest was 50kg. He would need to lift that.

His biceps split and his veins bulged. He smiled.

The normal person could never lift 50kg with one hand.

To lift the weight of a woman with an easy movement of the arm would hurt anyone who is not a bodybuilder or of a related career.

Clunk!

As the weight was greater, so was the sound. If he had been at a professional gym, he would have gotten everyone’s attention because he was using weights beyond imagination.

Whether it was a push-up or a chin-up, it was easy to do with one hand. Exercises that could be increased in intensity with the help of machines did not put any burden on his body.

He became more surprised as he continued to exercise. It felt like he had all of the advantages that athletes have.

‘It’s embarrassing to be called a superhuman.’

It was outstanding, but the anatomy was a mystery. There were a lot of people who could get to this state without going through body modification if they put the effort into it.

He had to become much stronger to gain the strength of a true superhuman.

‘This won’t do.’

His body itched. He cannot wait until tomorrow. He had decided on one mission per day because no matter what happened, there was always fatigue.

He stopped exercising and went back to his room to put on his equipment.

The red fire would be back-up – he would only use the sword. With this body, Level 1 would not be a problem even if he did not have the help of firearms and grenades.

Chapter 18

Kwajik!

The massive middle-kick struck the knife-tailed macaque in the temple. It was an attack to the death. Its head tipped at just one blow and its neck broke.

The knife-tailed macaques made a fuss and encircled Cha Jun Sung.

It was obvious that they were angry. He did not worry though because they were weak. It was just annoying that they attacked without warning.

Dozens of them poured in. Everything was blocked off, so there was no retreat. Whether he struck through either side or he kill all of them, Cha Jun Sung's only choice was annihilation.

The sword danced. It was a simple slash and stab. The knife-tailed macaques' limbs were getting cut off. The power in the slash was like the strength of an axe.

Cha Jun Sung stabbed the knife-tailed macaque in the stomach and broke its neck. It was because another one tried to get his head with its tail.

Knife-tail.

It is similar to the knives used in the kitchen. Since the tail was connected by a bone, being stabbed with the tail would feel like being stabbed with a knife. It was the best to avoid it.

“Cocky.”

Cha Jun Sung avoided the tail and grabbed the tail, pulling the arm. The knife-tailed macaque flew through the air and fell to the ground.

It wriggled as though it were having a seizure. Something had gone wrong with its back on the impact from the fall. It would die if left alone, but Cha Jun Sung did not do that.

He held it by its tail and spun before letting go. It flew and mixed in amongst the others that had been approaching.

Papat!

Cha Jun Sung hit the floor. There was no need to hesitate. His vision that had increased by 2 times and reflexes reacted automatically to the dangerous attack.

He had become strong enough to kill dozens of Level 1 mutants with his bare hands.

No matter how much they attacked, his outstanding equipment and strong body protected him.

This was body modification. It was the best item that made it possible for an individual to fight without cumbersome equipment.

Cha Jun Sung's sword split the knife-tailed macaque from its head to its rear. It felt strange. It was not bad.

His smile twisted. It was so sinister that Park Jin Hyuk would have taken a step back if he had seen. Cha Jun Sung was gripped with this new lack of emotion.

His blood boiled as his heart beat faster. He was overcome with an impulse to slaughter the mutants. His sanity sank and his instincts took over.

"I'll kill you all."

Bang bang!

Tutututu!

The grenade and red fire he had been holding back on did their jobs.

Beyond the smoke, Cha Jun Sung looked like a devil.

Hahaha!

Cha Jun Sung took the head of a macaque with a half-broken neck and pulled with all of his strength. The bones ripped apart. This was not something he would have done under normal circumstances.

He did kill as much as he could, but he had not done anything so cruel before.

He shoved the sword into open parts relentlessly. He only wounded them to the point right before death on purpose. He wanted to make them feel pain.

His eyes were bloodshot like a beast seeking its prey.

He killed and killed without stopping. He could not control the madness. He swept back and forth like a sailboat pushed over by a wave.

Roar!

As he heard a great cry, the leader of the macaques appeared. It was a Level 2 knife-tailed macaque. The numbers in his subordinates had visibly been reduced.

It was only a matter of time before they would be wiped out. The macaque needs to hurry up and kill Cha Jun Sung before they suffered more damages. This was only his thinking.

‘Is that the leader?’

Cha Jun Sung looked the macaque up in down while covered in blood. It was big.

There would be much pleasure in slashing it. If he were in his right mind, he would have started a search but he considered it cumbersome now. He brandished the sword while he thought.

‘Come at me at the same time. I’ll cut you into pieces of meat.’

Cha Jun Sung dragged his sword as he ran. The macaque also ran. He needed to relieve his desire before this feeling disappears.



Cha Jun Sung leaned against a boulder as he gasped for breath. It was a compromising situation.

In front of him, the macaque with the stomach ripped open was dead with its tongue hanging out.

“I...”

More serious than the fact that he had killed the mutants with cruelty was that he had lost his senses. He had gotten to this point after feeling strange when seeing blood.

He did not know the cause. Was it that he naturally fell into slaughter as he started killing living things? Or could this be post-traumatic stress disorder?

“No. I would have shown symptoms if it were PTSD. This happened suddenly.”

What could the problem be? He would figure it out no matter what.

If he went crazy while working in a party, nothing said that they would not mistake him for a mutant. If he had been as he just was, he would kill everyone.

“Body modification?”

The only change that had happened to him was the body modification. The equipment was inanimate. It could not shake a person’s sanity. He had no doubt it was the body modification.

“Odin.”

Cha Jun Sung called Odin.

There was no response. The helper does not communicate with their Lifer during a mission.

“I’ll just let it go since I’ll hear it once I return to the briefing room anyway. I don’t want to hear it while I’m in this mood.”

-[What do you think body modification is?]

Odin replied. But instead of a response, he turned it into a question.

“It’s strengthening a person’s body to make it possible for them to fight against mutants.”

-[That is correct. Then I will ask, won’t there be a price to this power?]

“Price?”

-[Each person has a different depth to their talent. People who are born with a talent are often called geniuses.]

Cha Jun Sung just listened. Odin’s explanation had not ended.

-[But genius or not, people are just another object, and there is an obvious limit when looking at the strain.]

Body modification breaks through the limits of each person and their strain. It is taking the skin off of the existing being and giving rebirth as a new being.

Evolution into a superhuman. Body modification was the process of making an unhumanly human by injecting a special transcendence cell.

“There is no price. I’m losing as much as I gain. So in other words, you’re saying it’s a side effect?”

-[I will not deny it.]

“That’s weird. Didn’t you say there would be no side effects until the 4th stage?”

-[This is not a side effect. It is something that naturally follows once you go through body modification. The side effects you will experience in the 5th stage have a direct impact on your life.]

“Why didn’t you tell me in advance? If I had known, I would have at least been expecting it.”

-[All we can do is answer your questions at a standard we are allowed to. We do not amicably solve your curiosity.]

Cha Jun Sung had an expression of giving up. It was just like an emotionless artificial intelligence to answer in this way.

This meant that he must now preemptively ask every possible question. Odin was saying that it was all the fault of the person who purchased the item without looking into everything.

“What’s the solution? If I get like this every time I see blood, I’ll have to keep doing solo missions forever.”

-[You can only focus so you don’t lose your sanity.]

“That’s...”

-[Control your sanity with your will. If you are swayed by just body modification, you will not be able to advance as a Lifer.]

“You’re playing on my pride. I was eaten up whole this time, but it won’t happen again. You think I’ll lose to a cell?”

-[You could lose...]

“What? Tell me honestly. You’re a person or artificial intelligence with emotions, right? When I think about it, you taunt people. You’re cunning.”

-[Since you have resolved your curiosity, please return if you would like to ask further questions. Would you like to return to the briefing room or reality?]

“Send me home.”

Only he would suffer if he kept arguing with Odin. He was satisfied with finding out the cause. He would need to learn to try to control himself while going through solo missions.

Chapter 19

He explained his situation to Park Jin Hyuk and went into solo missions alone until he became more stable.

Once he recognized the side effects of the body modification, there was little backlash. The madness came as it had, but it was not uncontrollable.

While he was busily spending his days, more and more Lifer group leaders broke through 1000 points. They had not broken through it alone, though.

It was the result of a full party of 10 people or of at least 5 or 6. There were even people who had stepped into 1500 among them.

The playing field was becoming more leveled. If he did not cross into Level D, Lifers were advancing so fast that, they might even catch up to Cha Jun Sung.

He looked for a party that slowly gathered points to try higher level missions.

As Lifers advance, their interest in higher missions increased. There were some comments on it on Lifer World.

Though not sure how difficult it would be, they were sure that they could beat it if Lifers with the skill gathered together. Cha Jun Sung agreed with this point.

If there were 10 people who had the best equipment in Level E, body modification, they would be able to go against 20 Level 2 mutants. But there were not very many Lifers like him.

The world was big and there are a lot of people, so it could not be that they did not exist. It was just not easy to find them. It was very lucky that he had found even Park Jin Hyuk.

‘It doesn’t need to be Korean Lifers. Let’s widen the area.’

This is what Park Jin Hyuk had said about 2 weeks after forming the party.

Park Jin Hyuk was certain. There was no Lifer higher than Cha Jun Sung in Korea. Korea was a country with a small population. It would be solved if they broadened their horizons.

They had only acted in Korea until now. Mission locations, however, were all over the world and they had only met Korean people up to this point. It was time to get out of it.

They loosened their restrictions. As they did so, an unimaginable number of parties appeared. There were various languages as well.

Cha Jun Sung and Park Jin Hyuk purchased a translator. It cost them 500 points, but it was worth the cost. It translated various languages.

They found comrades from countless countries like America, Britain, Russia, China, Japan, et cetera. A new world had opened.



A coffee shop in Seoul.

Cha Jun Sung called Park Jin Hyuk and had a meeting. There were too few members to call it a meeting, but he was leaving significance in meeting in person.

“Finally.”

“I found it.”

They each said a word. The result of broadening their horizon appeared. There were a lot of parties attempting the advance mission, but they were all below standard.

The thought of attempting with equipment that would be appropriate for a 1000 point mission! The more people there were, the more crazy people there were. If you wanted to die, you could die alone.

“If your equipment is in this state, you must be even greater in actuality.”

“That we don’t know.”

“The departure is in 5 days.”

“Until then, we’ll have to gather points and fill the space compression bag all the way.”

The two of them had purchased the space compression bag for 50,000 points. They could put in a cartful of items and the bag had the bonus of making all the items lighter.

They had passed the ordinary accoutrements they had carried along to a regular Lifer for free. He had been so thrilled to receive it to the point that they were embarrassed to hand it over.

They were out of points after getting the space compression bag. They could not know how long they would stay in the mission area. It could be a long time.

If they wanted to gather everything they needed to live, they would need to move busily for 5 days. They could not just fill it however, so they had decided on taking enough for 10 days.

“Let’s volunteer.”

“Okay.”

Of the 5 advance missions, they chose ‘Field of Meat’. That was the one that they were more attracted to and a party was being made for it.

Woong!

They each applied for it. They revealed their qualifications as one level above the party members. There was no meaning to fooling the equipment they have.

The party name was Kingdom. It seemed appropriate since the party leader was from Britain. He must not have been a very suspicious guy because he did not ask much about the qualifications.

Their team of 6 people became 8 with the 2 new people. It was up to the leader whether they would go with this group or fill the remaining 2 spots.

The departure time was different by country, but it was 8pm on the dot in 5 days for Korea. They would be notified if there were any changes.

“Stay next to me.”

“Of course.”

They did not know what kind of Lifers they would be completing the mission with. They needed to be wary of any team. The only people they could trust were each other for now.

The two discussed a number of cases in the coffee shop before separating.

5 days later, the morning came bright.



-[Level E Advance Mission: Field of Meat]

-[Goal: Attainment]

-[Scenario: An island located in the southern Philippines. A military base that housed 1500 soldiers has been abandoned for several years. Lifers must infiltrate the base to confirm the situation of the Field of Meat and quickly escape.]

-[Reward: 3000 points, Level D mission open]

Wiing.

Cha Jun Sung reread the mission information that he had already read through multiple times. There was scrappy information hidden inside each mission scenario.

1500 personnel.

It would not be wrong to think there could be 1500 mutants. Also, there was one goal but two conditions – confirming the situation and escaping.

‘Confirm the situation. And escape, there would naturally be an escape once they complete the mission. Does it mean that they need to get to the outside instead of returning?’

That could be wrong. It was just a guess. However, if they had expectations in advance, they would not be so surprised when the situation actually arose.

‘What about Jin Hyuk?’

Cha Jun Sung was the first to be summoned. Summons were done sequentially.

Since all he could do was wait, he watched the vast sea in solitude. 1 to 2 minutes?
After around that much time, there was a signal for a summons.

Woongwoong.

With a resonance, Lifers from all different nations were summoned one by one.

Park Ji Hyuk was among them.

“Jun Sung.”

“I was scared when you didn’t come.”

Seuk.

Cha Jun Sung joked around as he and Park Jin Hyuk checked their equipment.

The other Lifers did the same. As they did this, they recognized each other and gathered in one place since they were a party.

4 people from Britain, 3 from America, 1 from Japan, and 2 from Korea. Looking at his outstanding equipment, he looked like he had the skill to break 1000 points alone.

“It’s nice to meet you. I’m Lloyd from Britain. These are my comrades Henry and Martin, and this is Carlyle.”

The translator worked well. The fluent English was translated into Korean.

Seuk.

The Lifers’ eyes flitted around. It was a search to determine each person’s intention.

Could it be said to be an evaluation of whether or not the person would be of assistance to themselves and to the party?

Cha Jun Sung did the same. Lloyd and the sturdy men he introduced did not seem to be ordinary people.

How could he give an example?

Right.

They were like soldiers. It was like looking at well-trained soldiers. They had only nodded courteously at Lloyd's introduction, and had not spoken a word.

'That man. He seems like he'll be a troublemaker.'

Park Jin Hyuk wrote on his PDA and showed it to Cha Jun Sung. He was referring to Carlyle, not Lloyd.

An arrogant look.

This young man had an air that he knew he was the best in the world. Parties were about teamwork. It was a headache if they did not communicate well.

'It's too late to be averse to him.'

'Okay.'

Cha Jun Sung spoke like this, but he also had negative thoughts. If he said it badly, he seemed self-righteous. There was a need to watch over him a little more.

Chapter 20

“Hicks from America, this is Smith and Jamie.”

“My name is Kayamoto.”

“Cha Jun Sung.”

“I’m Park Jin Hyuk.”

Everyone left their helpers’ names and used their real names. At that, Cha Jun Sung also revealed his real name. It did not really matter because they were all foreign.

As it became Cha Jun Sung’s turn, Carlyle crossed his arms and looked at him. It was the first time that they were meeting. Why was he staring like that? Did he like men?

‘Gay?’

‘Looks like he’s examining the equipment.’

‘Wow! Has he put down all his courtesy? He’s left quite an intense first impression.’

He did not react to Park Jin Hyuk’s complaint. He could put up with this much and get past it. It would be laughable to start a fight over something like this.

Carlyle motioned a finger at Lloyd. It showed his personality. He was treating someone as old as his father like his dog.

He whispered something in Lloyd’s ear. It became the focus of everyone’s attention. He spoke so low that Cha Jun Sung could not hear it even with his developed sense of hearing from the body modification.

Lloyd’s expression became uncomfortable. He must have been demanding something strange.

“Mister Cha?”

“Do you have something to ask?”

“Excuse me, but is the equipment you’re using the best of Class E?”

Cha Jun Sung nodded. He did not hide it. It was something that they could find out if they looked at the points in the store. Once he answered, the questions became stark.

“How many functions are there in the vision aid on your helmet? Is that a space compression bag on your back? How were you able to gather points?”

Cha Jun Sung frowned. This was surpassing courtesy. The other Lifers who had been watching stopped treating it like someone else’s ordeal.

Equipment worth a few tens of thousands. They could not help but be curious. The space compression bag was especially the object of awe.

“Look here. What are you trying to do?”

“Just stay put.”

Park Jin Hyuk went at Lloyd in disbelief and glared at Carlyle. Cha Jun Sung spoke. He was just the messenger.

“What do you want to say? If he’s curious, tell him to ask himself.”

“Carlyle is expressing interest in Mr. Cha’s equipment. The market price for 1 point is \$70, but he’ll give you \$100.”

He said that he would pay the price in diamonds on the spot.

Park Jin Hyuk held his stomach in laughter. He was incredulous. The man is crazy. He is coming into a mission area to do what? Buy equipment? He could not understand.

“I will refuse.”

“If you will sell it, Carlyle will give you his equipment as well. Then there is no issue in going through with the mission. It’s a chance to make a lot of money.”

“No!”

Cha Jun Sung looked past Carlyle to reject.

It did not make sense to sell it in the first place – they were facing a 3000-point mission. In a situation where their lives were at stake, his equipment was invaluable.

“I’ll give you \$200 for every 1 point.”

“No thank you.”

“A bag with \$15 million. I’ll hand the whole thing over with my equipment. What do you think?”

“You brought useless diamonds in a situation where bullets and food are lacking? Did you acquire all of your equipment like this?”

Carlyle must have felt guilty because his expression became cold. The atmosphere was becoming dark because of a rude British man.

‘Let’s go with Plan B.’

‘Call!’

Cha Jun Sung sent him the signal. Park Jin Hyuk accepted his decision delightfully.

Plan A and B.

They did not hold great meanings. A was in the event that they liked the party, B was if they did not. Since they chose B, they were thinking of escaping.

“We will leave the party. Instead, we’ll block off the rear for you.”

“What does that mean?”

“Can you control Carlyle? A party is a team. If there is any one unit that cannot be controlled, it is worse than working alone.”

Carlyle did not understand the concept of a team. He would do everything in the way he pleased it seemed.

3 out of the 10 people in the party were under his influence. Including the one

speaking for him, it was 4 people. He had control of 40% of the power.

“Um...”

“We’ll move on our own somewhere nearby. Only call us when you need to.”

Though it had not worked out well, they were tied together because they had entered as a party. Separating would not be good for anyone. He meant that they would stay together but not ‘stay together’.

“Stop.”

Cha Jun Sung ignored the voice behind him and walked toward the forest.

“Drag him to back him.”

“Drag him?”

He stopped at the offensive tone. Henry and Martin approached him, walking past Lloyd who was laughing in defeat. They must really intend on dragging him back.

“Don’t approach him.”

“Put it down.”

Cha Jun Sung stopped Park Jin Hyuk who was threatening them with his crossbow. Using their weapons was the worst method. It was better not to do something that they could not reverse.

Carlyle showed his teeth to Cha Jun Sung. A pretentious smirk.

“They’re elites in the Special Forces back at home. Should we take a look at what you’ve got?”

“Ha ha!”

Special Forces?

In this world where boundaries have fallen apart, Lifers were murder weapons. It seemed Carlyle thought that he picked the best weapons.

Pat!

Cha Jun Sung moved first to wilt their wills. This place was a hell where common sense did not always work. He was also curious to see what made them so confident.

Seuk.

Henry and Martin did not get surprised and split to either side. It was a cheap trick to split Cha Jun Sung's attention. Unfortunately, this did not matter.

"Better for me if you separate."

Cha Jun Sung twisted his body as he kicked at Henry's head.

Henry easily blocked it by putting up both of his arms.

He was puzzled. He had blocked it lightly, but he felt like his body had lifted into the air. Lifers' faces passed him. Everyone looked astonished.

"Kuk!"

Cha Jun Sung first hit Henry's abdomen and he went flying off to the side.

The shock of penetration in his stomach... it was almost too much.

He coughed a rough breath. He would have passed out if he had not been wearing impact tights.

Cha Jun Sung had twice the muscle strength, but Henry would not die from getting beaten thanks to the absorption of his equipment. Cha Jun Sung counted on this and stepped on Henry's body with cruelty.

"If you come at me again, you can expect an arm or leg to break."

Henry grinded his teeth. His head was clear but his body is not listening. He had lost embarrassingly. Whether or not he had been prepared, the result was decided.

"Next?"

Cha Jun Sung looked at Martin. He seemed to be very tense since he had watched

everything just now. He looked absurd in his hesitation.

“Be careful.”

Henry warned Martin while he was still lying down. He did not know how Cha Jun Sung had gained such strength, but his vision would become white with the wrong hit.

Martin shouted as he stretched out his arm. As expected of someone from the Special Forces, his movement was deliberate. He kept attacking the vitals.

Cha Jun Sung moved his body to avoid all of Martin’s attacks. A speed that was neither slow nor fast. This was all thanks to his improved eyesight.

Kwang!

A strong turning kick hit Martin’s chest. The strength of his legs was 3 times that of his arms. If it had not been for Martin’s equipment, his breastbone would have been shattered and he would have died.

Cough cough!

Martin grabbed his chest and got to his knees. The impact must have pressed on his lungs because he could not stop coughing. Saliva kept coming out of his mouth.

“Body modification?”

“What?”

Smith spoke on a whim. If the reality version was the same as the virtual, there was no way it would be missing body modification, the most important element in fighting mutants.

It was not an item available in Level E. Then did that mean Cha Jun Sung opened a higher level store?

“If that’s true, it means the space compression bag and body modification are in the superior equipment section of Level E... How many points did you accumulate? Is that even possible?”

The Lifers gave their opinions. He had just fought with his bare hands and left a big

impression. It was clear to everyone he would be the most skilled among the 10 people.

Cha Jun Sung shortened the distance between himself and Carlyle who was staring blankly. Lloyd blocked him, but he did not last long and fell like Henry and Martin did.

“Cover me so they can’t do anything stupid.”

“There there! Please be quiet until he’s done talking.”

Park Jin Hyuk pointed his crossbow at Lloyd. It was an automatic crossbow. At this distance, it was no different from a SMG.

“Don’t come close.”

“Why do I have to follow your orders? Show the confidence you just had.”

“How dare you!”

Carlyle took out the pistol from his waist. It could not have taken more than a second, but Cha Jun Sung was much faster.

A sword was withdrawn and stopped right in front of Carlyle’s forehead. If he had been unable to control his strength, it would have dug into Carlyle’s head.

Carlyle fell to the floor. His bleak face was pitiful.

It had been an instant to change his haughtiness into fear. In the end, he was just an immature asshole. Cha Jun Sung would have accepted it if he had kept his nose turned up until the end.

“Stupid asshole. Let’s go.”

Kik kik!

He was so pathetic that Cha Jun Sung cursed and went into the forest. Park Jin Hyuk looked at Carlyle as if it served him right and followed.

The Lifers watching the two laughed. Cha Jun Sung seemed impressive, but Carlyle seemed like an idiot.

Chapter 21

“That felt great!”

“This isn’t what we came here for, but it’s hard to meet normal people. It was expected.”

“The world is full of greed.”

“Right. And this place is like heaven and hell where your dreams come true as long as you survive.”

For people who were sick of their lives, Life Mission was a land of opportunity for them to escape reality. It was not impossible to just close their eyes and throw themselves away into the game world.

“Are we really going to support them from the rear?”

“We’ll have to.”

Cha Jun Sung intended on supporting the back as he had said he would. He did not care if he could not catch mutants since he had not entered the mission to gain points.

The goal of this mission was to open Level D for Park Jin Hyuk. They needed to do this for themselves. When their power is suspended, the radius for their activity becomes smaller.

They could become the target for mutants if they fell too far from the party.

He had realized as he did missions that the helper placed them in starting places that were relatively as safe as possible.

As long as they did not go wherever they wanted, they were always placed at the optimal starting point.

“What do you think they’re doing?”

“They’ll have to discuss their plans. Even if their personalities don’t match, they’ll be

fine if they can tune them. But it's dangerous because Carlyle is a maverick who won't listen to anyone else."

Cha Jun Sung had spent 10 years in Life Mission. He had been in thousands of parties and he had met all kinds of troublemakers.

Swiping items was commonplace, and there were people who threw others under the bus or ordered their parties around.

What's yours is mine.

What's mine is mine.

Your mistakes are your mistakes.

My mistakes are also your mistakes.

He had never ended missions with people like that with a smile.

"Do you think he's nobility?"

"He could be since he said something about the elite Special Forces."

There was still nobility in Britain. The boundaries with people had become more relaxed in modern times, but it was difficult to shake off the arrogance of tradition.

His behavior was understandable if he accumulated an enormous wealth and a rich history behind him, though it didn't change the fact that he was a jerk.

"I'm pretty sure they won't move from a safe place at night. They don't have night-vision goggles."

Cha Jun Sung and Park Jin Hyuk had night vision. It functioned so well that they could see at night as if it were broad daylight. They needed to take advantage of points like this.

"It's wide."

"Very."

Cha Jun Sung examined the forest before him. He could not know how wide the island was. There was no way the helpers would tell them willingly.

The location of the military base was more important than the width of the area. Maybe it was because of the low altitude, but they could not see any towering buildings. It was highly possible that the base was in a basement somewhere.

“Change the vision goggles to thermographics.”

“Okay.”

People were more vulnerable in nature because their senses have degraded in comfortable environments. They would not be able to function without help from their items.

A light came from the vision goggles, changing it to thermographics. It was the disagreeable party members.

“They’re still in the same place.”

“Seems they’re not in a rush.”

The thermographic mode detected heat within 50 meters. Since there was also an infrared mode, they could see organisms who did not have heat signatures as well. The party was not moving. There were a lot of objects obstructing their view, but they could see each movement through the goggles.

“Huh? Ah... He’s really trash.”

“Hm!”

A Lifer who seemed to be Carlyle was hitting someone who looked like Henry and Martin. He was venting his anger at Cha Jun Sung out on them.

“Is he really an idiot?”

“I’m pretty sure he’s had everything go his way until now because he was born with a silver spoon.”

It might have been the first indignity he had experienced since birth. He was wrapped

up in the thought, 'How dare someone like he'.

"They don't have a space compression bag and all they have in terms of weapons are firearms with a silencer."

"50 points."

It was a good thing that they brought the silencer, but mutants were sensitive to the smell of gunpowder. They needed to have something like a crossbow at least.

As long as other variables didn't arise, Park Jin Hyuk's crossbow would work. It was pretty powerful. If hit from a close distance, even a Level 2 would be badly wounded.

A silencer could not be underestimated as an advantage. Since it can be reused, it can be used in slaughter as long as it was not broken or lost.

"I'm going."

"Let's keep some distance. Whether we like them or not, we need to help cover the rear."



The party went into the forest without hesitation. Staying still in one place did not help in completing missions. They needed to go through with the mission even if it was dangerous.

Seuk.

Lloyd and the two men stood in a triangle to protect Carlyle. The rest took in their own boundaries as they went forward. They could not trust Hicks and the others.

Carlyle's incompetence had been revealed in the fight just now. The first impression of him was of him slumping to the floor at an attack with a sword.

As an afterthought, they wondered how it would have been if they followed Cha Jun Sung instead.

"It's peaceful."

“You can’t let your guard down even for a moment. It can break in an instant.”

It would have been better if the mutants just appeared because they would have focused on battle.

As long as this silence continued, they would have to be consumed in anxiety. But that did not mean in any way that they wanted to fight with the mutants.

“Will they really help us?”

“They will.”

Lloyd responded to Hicks with certainty. If they were going to completely leave the party, they would not have mentioned support.

“They’ll probably be following us from a blind spot.”

The vision goggles sold in the store have a few times the capability of those from the military. They could not hide from them no matter where they tried to go.

‘I’m sure they’ll be 40 to 50 meters from us.’

It was frustrating. A skilled Lifer was more appreciated as the mission is more dangerous. It was a loss to miss out on Cha Jun Sung because of Carlyle.

Carlyle Venter.

Duke Venter’s 2nd son. Because he was spoiled as a child, he had the shortcoming of looking at the world from his standard.

Lloyd also knew.

Telling someone to sell their equipment during a missions was unheard of.

However, he had a duty to act on the orders given by his superior. Even though he became a Lifer, he was a citizen of Britain and soldier under Duke Venter.

He was just holding back because Duke Venter had warned him. He was not blindly holding back. He would be getting that much compensation from Carlyle and his family.

Duke Venter wants Carlyle to become a famous Lifer in Britain. He had pushed him in so he could somehow make a living for himself.

The reality version of Life Mission was already known in places all over the world. Each nation was in the process of gathering as many Lifers as they could.

It had been impossible to prevent the information from leaking because it was mushrooming. In a few months, Lifers' identities would be known to the whole world.

Children from rich families in England got into parties by handing over large sums of money.

Lifers thought of it as a way to make money on the side and did not turn it down because they were making money on top of the points they get for catching mutants.

This was happening outside of England as well.

Life Mission was a different world, but the wealthy advanced faster than those without money. The estimation came out from the way someone like Carlyle without the talent was able to make it so far.

"There is a vacant lot ahead. What do you think about resting while we scout the area?"

"Very well."

Lloyd was brought back from his thoughts at Hicks' words. There was a limit to moving at night without night vision. It would come in handy to keep places to rest in mind.

Seureuk.

An opening appeared when they cleared the forest.

Smith and Jamie who are rangers went out first to examine the area.

Smith sent the signal that nothing was suspicious. Jamie set up booby traps. Henry and Martin also helped in setting them up with their skillful workmanship.

A cave or something similar was useful. The smaller a place was and the less space there was to guard, the safer Lifers felt.

“Hicks, I looked from the top of a tree but there isn’t a building that looked like the military base. It seems the prediction that it’s underground is correct.”

Smith’s binoculars did not catch anything. Because the island was at a low altitude they had purposefully chosen a high location.

At this height, they would be able to tell buildings apart if they even reached 3 floors.

“Can you find it?”

“I’ll be able to find it but... the process will be a burden for the party.”

Hicks squirmed his fingers. There was a limit to what the equipment they brought could do.

The longer they stayed in a mission area, the more they are at a disadvantage. If they wasted time in looking for the military base, they would not be able to survive once they penetrated it.

“It’s fine. We can find the path.”

“Path?”

“It’ll automatically appear if we pass it.”

Lloyd organized his thoughts and spoke. It had been years since it had been abandoned. There would be a path somewhere that the mutants used to access it.

“So the path is the entrance?”

“Yes. Do you think they would have been smart enough to erase their trail?”

Hicks waved his hand in denial. Assume that somehow they had erased it the first time.

To repeat this for several years? Even a thorough person would find it bothersome later. What was the point of that on an island where no one looked for them?

“The night vision would have been of great help in finding the path.”

Hicks complained that it was a waste. He could not be sure how many functions there

were in Cha Jun Sung's goggles, but it would have been helpful if they had it.

Hicks wanted to work with people he was comfortable with as well, but he held back. If they scattered here, they would be divided. They needed to maintain this group even if it was fragile.

One needed to be quick in everything. He envied Cha Jun Sung who fell out of the group.

"Everyone here for a second."

Lloyd called the party. All members except Carlyle gathered.

"As you know, time is gold to us. Instead of wasting it on looking for a path, it's right to go into the military base."

"Do you have a method?"

"We'll have to lure them and follow their route."

"It's dangerous but we'll save on time if it works."

"How can we lure them if we've used the odorless spray? Have you bought the bloody meat or something from the store? Ha ha!"

Chapter 22

From afar, Park Jin Hyuk picked his ear with his finger.

“We don’t need to think so deeply into it. I mean someone will become the bait.”

The expressions of the party members hardened at the mention of bait. If they had not heard wrong, he meant for someone to become live bait to lure the mutants.

“It’s a joke. If we make a small wound and put the blood in a specific location, I’m sure they’ll come looking for it. We can follow after hiding.”

They would have come up with a precise operation if the opponent were human, but there was no need to go that far with mutants. This was a simple, yet effective method.

“The person who will make the wound...?”

“Since I brought it up, I’ll do it. Let’s look for a location.”

As Lloyd claimed it, Hicks’ people brightened. They were not scared of making a wound, but they did not like the thought of what could happen if the mutants caught scent of the wound.

Tatak.

The party’s movement became active as they now had a task to complete. They would save time if they succeeded or would have to keep looking if they did not. There was nothing to lose.



The party members hid behind a boulder and tree. They had chosen the location to lure the mutants to as an open place about 30m away.

Seukuk.

Lloyd cut his hand with a dagger.

As the sharp blade cut along his palm, blood flowed out.

The flow became stronger as he squeezed his wrist. A small amount might not carry the smell very far even with the wind. and he needed to make it count.

Seuk.

He wiped his hands with a clean cloth and put ointment on it. As soon as he put the medicine on, a scab formed.

He stayed on the spot and used the odorless spray. If he cleaned the blood while he moved, they would not be able to control the smell. He needed to take care of it in one spot.

The party members were waiting behind a projection. The projection was a camouflage item that let objects pass through while hiding up to 10 people.

Lloyd's party had invested 1000 points on the projection. They had survived a few times because of it. It was compatible with the odorless spray.

"That's fascinating."

"There are a lot of cool things when you look through the store."

It was impossible to look inside from outside, but the reverse was possible. Just as there were items necessary in battle, there were items necessary to survival.

Jiing.

Lloyd joined them. When Henry covered them with the projection, a boulder and tree appeared, erasing all traces of the party. Perfect camouflaging.

From then, they waited in silence for the mutants to appear.



They started getting hungry 2 hours after they set up the trap. A strange sound came from one side of the forest. No one suspected that it was a mutant.

Hwak.

There was a fishy smell. The smell of blood. It had been long since Lloyd's blood had hardened. This was fresh – like that of an animal that had just been slaughtered.

The human sense of smell was not sensitive. But it was clear that it was nearby. And then, in a matter of a few blinks, there was a mutant in front of them.

It is a biped and similar to a human being. The differences were in its sharp teeth, awl-like fingers and toenails, and arms and legs that seemed a bit too long.

'Cannibal!'

'There's no way all 1500 mutants mentioned in the scenario are cannibals?'

Cannibal.

It was the strongest creature in Level 1. Its physical ability was that of a sturdy man, but its speed was supreme.

With a crafty personality, it had the habit of figuring out the opponent's disadvantage while fighting.

Facing one cannibal was like going up against 3 or 4 mid-Level 1 mutants.

Sniff sniff.

The cannibal looked around and put his nose to Lloyd's blood. It seemed to like the smell by the way it kept flaring its nose.

Its bumpy tongue licked the blood. The party members shivered when thinking about something so hideous running its tongue along their skin.

Kwajik.

The cannibal ate something it had been holding in its hand. It had been chewed to the point where it was unrecognizable, but it looked like a mutant.

He ate it ravenously. The large piece of meat was gone in seconds and its stomach bulged. It was an amount that a person would not have been able to eat.

It did not leave even after eating the meat. Looking at it closely, it was hesitating

around the area where Lloyd's blood had fallen. It wanted more.

The party members watched this for dozens of minutes while hiding behind the projection. Every second felt like a minute. They just wanted for it to go away.

Seuk.

Their desperation was rewarded when the cannibal left the blood and turned its back.

'Are we going to follow it?'

'Not yet.'

Lloyd shook his head. If the cannibal was using its head, they would be caught as soon as they went out. They needed to take some time instead of going out right away.

30 minutes passed after the cannibal disappeared. At that point, they put the projection away.

There was a limit to how long they could hide. With this much time, it was okay for them to slowly follow it.

Lloyd searched the ground. Since it had not been long since it left, it left its trace in broken twigs and footsteps.

"Let's go."

The party got their equipment together and followed Lloyd. The search had started.

Rustle.

It was after the cannibal and Lloyd's party had disappeared. Bushes nearby rustled as something raised its head.

Kiki!

A rough face drew a dark line. Another cannibal was looking in the direction that the party had gone in. It was a horrific scene.

Papat!

The cannibal hid its trace. It looked like the party who had set up a trap to lure the mutants were the ones being lured instead.



“What is that?”

“A trap.”

“Not that. Why is it so smart? It would put Zhuge Liang to shame.”

If Zhuge Liang had heard this, he would have been astonished. One of the most accomplished strategists of the past being compared to cannibals.

Cha Jun Sung and Park Jin Hyuk had witnessed everything from the start to finish.

When the first cannibal appeared, the second had settled in the bushes without moving. It looked like a lookout just in case it was a trap.

It seemed to be a case where they knew of the party’s existence but did not know its exact location. Its smile when the party folded the projection proved this.

The situation was like a snake luring itself with its own tail and ripping it apart to get eaten. The party thought that it had succeeded in luring the cannibal, but it had dug its own grave.

They were Lifers who had gone through everything, but they could not have dreamed that a Level 1 would use such strategy like a high level mutant.

They had gotten caught in a trap so easily. Cha Jun Sung did not consider them stupid. He would have fallen for it as well if he had been in their position.

“Don’t we need to go and tell them? They’ll be annihilated like that.”

Park Jin Hyuk was right. If left alone, they would get trapped and become the cannibals’ food. If they ran to tell them now, they could stop it.

“They might be able to find the military base too.”

“That’s so, but I feel wrong about using people as live bait.”

Park Jin Hyuk was pure like his young age. Cha Jun Sung did not want to do it either, but they could get dragged into it as well if they acted too quickly.

“We don’t have the responsibility of saving them just because we saw what happened.”

It may have sounded cold, but it was the truth. To put their lives on the line for others? They could do that, but only as long as they were people worth doing that for.

At this moment, Cha Jun Sung was not bothered by being on the sidelines.

He was just sorry that just as the party had lured the mutant to find the base, he was using the party though it could be dangerous.

“Let’s help them if we get the chance. Then we’ll have to follow them, won’t we?”

“Yes!”

Park Jin Hyuk’s face brightened. Cha Jun Sung did not want them to be killed either. It was better the more Lifers there were. If they had the chance, they would help in any way they could.

If not... they would leave them.

Chapter 23

Cha Jun Sung scanned the area with his goggles and slowly followed. If a battle ensued, an explosion would go off and their location would be revealed anyway.

He was a beginner at chasing but since he knew the direction that the cannibals and party had gone, he could just go straight without going off route.

The interval of time between Cha Jun Sung and the party members was 10 minutes.

They thought that the party would be slow because it was a forest but the thermographic goggles could not detect them.

“What do you think Field of Meat means? It seems to be related to cannibals.”

“As in meat.”

The mission name was the mission itself. In explicit situations, they could figure out what mutant it was before being summoned. Field of Meat lacked that kind of hint.

“Should we try figuring out the meaning?”

“He he!”

There was no need to figure it out too deeply. Meat referred to the meat of cattle, and the field meant land to grow crops on.

Putting the words together, it was Field of Meat. It was a strange combination.

“Meat farm?”

“Could be since they can’t have just eaten whatever they wanted on this isolated island for years. My thoughts are a little different though.”

Cultivating could be used to mean herding. It could be possible from the behavior they just showed, but their patience would not allow for it.

Park Jin Hyuk's eye shone. He wanted Cha Jun Sung to hurry up and tell him because he was curious.

"It seems like a meat warehouse."

"Farm or warehouse, same thing."

"There's a difference between cultivating it and saving it. I'm positive the cannibals have a warehouse where they gathered their provisions. All we have to do is confirm that and escape."

"That's random."

"What is?"

"It doesn't matter for missions like annihilation because you can just kill everyone, but there was always a fair reason for ones where the goal was attainment. It's too random."

Annihilation and escape was just killing and running away, so the mission scenarios were not complex. In attainment, they needed to complete a duty to complete the mission.

In the attainment missions that Park Jin Hyuk had completed until now, there had always been a fair reason.

Situations like destroying mutant hatcheries to stop their breeding, connecting the electricity in a demolished building, or quickly reaching another area.

However, Field of Meat was to check a plantation, warehouse, whatever it was, and escape.

This was where his question arose. What were they supposed to do once they checked it?

He had just thought that was how it was just in the beginning, but this was an island and there were cannibals – he realized that it was not just a regular attainment mission when he linked the food issue.

“What’s it to us if it’s random? Did we pay attention to things like that when we accepted missions?”

“That’s true!”

All they had to do was complete it to go on to Level D. The rest did not matter.

“It seems they went pretty far.”

“I’ll say. I think it’s been an hour since we started following them and we still haven’t caught up to them.”

With the search range on the goggles, they could speedily prepare for any danger.

Therefore, they were moving pretty fast. Under the pressure that they needed to follow the cannibal, the party members in comparison could not help but be slow. At this point, they needed to catch up to them.

Ack!

Cha Jun Sung and Park Jin Hyuk hid behind a large tree. One of the party members was screaming. Something had happened. Had they gotten caught in the cannibals’ trap?

“I can’t catch them on the thermographics.”

“That means they’re at least 50m away.”

“I’ll go left.”

“I’ll go right.”

It was better to share the work instead of setting up an unnecessary boundary. The two went along each of their routes and carefully approached where the sound came from.

He controlled the distance with the thermographic goggles in mind. After advancing a few dozen meters, it flushed in heat with the detection of several living beings.

There are a lot. It is difficult to count the exact number in these circumstances, but an estimated 50 or 60 mutants were closing in on the party members.

‘Jun Sung, what is that solid thing? The thing that’s tying the Lifers down.’

‘A net?’

The party was caught in a net woven intricately like a spider web so that they could not move. Like a net tightening in on its prize, it made movement awkward.

Hihi!

Kyakya!

The cannibals did not attack the party members. They acted as if they were observing monkeys at a zoo. It seemed they had no intention to kill them.

‘Save them?’

Cha Jun Sung contemplated it. As his thoughts turned, he calculated their gains and losses.

50 mutants?

They could win if they attacked. If Park Jin Hyuk just covered him well, he could cut the net and work with the party members.

‘I’m reluctant.’

‘Jun Sung?’

‘If they’re going to kill them, they’ll act on it. Wait until they move.’

They caught the Lifers but were not killing them. He could not figure out the cannibals’ plans.

Who could tell if that was also a trap?

There was an impending flow and they need to figure out what that flow was. Caution was key.



'Save us!'

'I don't want to die like this!'

'Ack!'

The party screamed like crazy.

To be rescued.

To be helped.

Their voices just echoed inside because they were being shocked by the electrical net. They only had their five senses. They were paralyzed except for their eyes flitting back and forth.

'How could something like a cannibal have an item like this... '

Lloyd felt as if what had happened to the party was a dream.

Cannibals that had been waiting high in trees had dropped the net. A shocking current had gone through their bodies and they were unable to move.

Where could they have gone wrong? It was all so sudden. They were trying to lure the mutants, but they had been lured instead.

Electric net.

It is a capture item that can be bought in the store for 500 points.

A mutant under Level 2 becomes paralyzed under the net and is not able to get out. But he himself had been caught under it instead of a mutant.

'You laid out the method! Figure out a solution!'

Hicks looked at Lloyd with despair and resentment. He did not care about politeness or courtesy when they were about to be killed like dogs.

Lloyd accepted Hicks' resentment. There was no solution.

They could not speak and their bodies were not listening. They had not imagined that the cannibals would be so smart. An electric net on top of that.

'I'm sure he'll be watching?'

Lloyd suddenly thought about Cha Jun Sung. He was by far the best Lifer he has seen thus far. His comrade Park Jin Hyuk was no joke either.

Since they had spoken as if they would follow from behind, they could have been watching the scene. He hoped that they would come to the rescue, but the reality was the gutter. There were too many cannibals.

Cha Jun Sung needed to take some risk if they wanted to save the party. If any of the party members had to make the same choice, they would choose safety instead.

'Why aren't they killing us?'

The cannibals did not do anything other than observe them.

They played around and yelled. It felt like they were subordinates who had completed their tasks and were waiting to report to their seniors.

Keureung!

Kik!

They heard an uncanny cry.

The cannibals straightened their shoulders and stood to either side.

A mutant 2 heads taller than the cannibals came and walked over to the party members. Their expressions were that of horror.

'Evil Cannibal!'

'We're done.'

It was a desperate situation – the evil cannibal was an adult cannibal. Visually, it just

looked longer, but it actually had 3 times the physical strength of a regular cannibal.

They could not guarantee beating it even if they had full use of their equipment.

Kuku!

The evil cannibal pushed its face toward the party members. They wanted to die every time the vicious pupil scanned over their entire bodies.

That would've been better than being ripped apart in a painful death.

Kwak!

Kyak!

The evil cannibal waved its hands and laid down orders. The cannibals were going to take them out of the net and take them to headquarters.

"Let me go, you assholes!"

"Ack!"

Puk puk!

As soon as the shock was released, Smith and Jamie struggled. The cannibals swung at their heads with their primitive bodies.

Since they were hit without their equipment, they just fell like corpses. This anger was vented on others as well.

All 8 people who were hit because of the 2 who struggled became quiet.

Kukya!

The cannibals were returning. They seemed to be happy because they succeeded in their hunt. A few even danced.

Chapter 24

“If we had gotten involved, there would have been a struggle.”

“A struggle would have been fortunate.”

Cha Jun Sung who had been watching in hiding let out his breath. The cannibals disappeared from the goggles. They had not been picked up in the cannibals’ senses because they were far off.

“If I had fought the evil cannibal, I’m pretty sure you would have had to handle all of the cannibals.”

“That’s too much.”

Park Jin Hyuk waved the notion away. If it had been a small space like the underpass, the space he had to cover would’ve been limited and it could have worked.

A sniper was most appreciated as support, not as the main.

This was a forest. They might have been able to do something if they had already claimed their spots from a distance, but they would not last long if they approached them in this state.

If cannibals appeared from everywhere, they would die helplessly even if the heavens sent a sharpshooter down to them. They might even curse the heavens.

“It’s different from the virtual version.”

“Are you saying that reality can change at any time unlike the virtual where everything is already decided?”

Cha Jun Sung nodded.

His brain held extensive information on Life Mission. He could think of a mutant’s name, skill, and weakness just by looking at its face.

Though it was just the virtual version, he had run his blog for 10 years and had gone up to a high position – past the super rankers.

His last Evil Queen raid was still a legend.

“The mutants in the virtual version moved in a system, but the mutants in reality move on their own. The difference between an existing limit and the lack of one. This difference is creating variables that Lifers can’t expect.”

The cannibals had built certain ranks albeit barbaric. They were even putting good use to Lifers’ items that they had somehow gotten their hands on.

They had developed the learning ability to use tools and remember things they had seen. This would not have been possible in the virtual version where they followed the system.

Just as ancient people had followed the steps to become modern humans, it looked like the mutants were following the same steps.

“What are you going to do?”

“Should we give up?”

“Are you serious?”

“Joking.”

They could not give up now when this was the beginning. Cha Jun Sung looked at the ground. The cannibals had left a clear trace.

If they had used a mix of traces and hunches to come here, now they were going to follow only by looking at the floor. The military base would be where the trail ends.



Kuok!

The cannibals and evil cannibal went into a cave among crevices.

Is the base inside a cave? It is the best location to avoid sightings from outside. A few

cannibals were standing guard at the entrance.

“Is that the only entrance?”

“That’s the worst.”

They looked all over the area, but there was only one entry into the base. If they wanted to infiltrate, they had no choice but to go where they would be seen.

“There are 2 guards.”

“We need to go closer. There’s a limit to what the goggles can pick up because of the distance.”

From 50m, there were only 2 cannibals. Since they could not just go barging in, they needed to get at least 10m from the cave to identify what was inside.

“There’s less cover as we get closer. It’s dangerous if you think of their senses.”

“Hm... we can’t stay here.”

“Even if we kill the guards or lure them somewhere and somehow succeed in infiltrating, we don’t know how many are inside. As long as we’re checking it, let’s do it right.”

Cha Jun Sung left Park Jin Hyuk where they were and disappeared for 10 minutes before returning. They needed a simple experiment to take on the cannibals.

“Let’s go up that tree. It’s possible, right?”

“I don’t think I can do it.”

Park Jin Hyuk looked at the tree and shook his head. It was about 20m high. The support was not very sturdy either. He could not climb it with his muscular strength.

“Get on my back.”

“Huh?”

“Hurry.”

Park Jin Hyuk put all of their equipment in the space compression bag and got on his back. Cha Jun Sung felt the heavy weight and carefully went up the tree.

The two weighed over 160kg with all of their equipment. Even with the body modification, he would not have been able to climb up if his basic strength had been terrible.

“After 1 and 6 minutes, I’m going to set off a shot at 150m on either side.”

“Ah! They’ll come out in hordes.”

“If the cannibals were standing guard on a schedule, only the ones that were on duty will come out. The others won’t pay attention to it.”

The feeling of being annoyed was existent regardless of species, an emotion that all living beings have in common. Even cannibals will want to rest during their breaks.

The cannibals that come out to the noise will be the ones on duty at the time.

They had brought 8 sonic grenades to create disturbances. There were 6 left. He had set up 2 just in case because changes could happen at any time.

Wiing!

The first grenade went off. It was fine because it went off from afar, but anyone who had been in front of it would have gone deaf.

Kyak?

Kya!

The first to react were the 2 guards. As soon as they yelled in the direction of the noise, dozens of cannibals rushed out of the cave.

‘2, 5, 7, 15, 20.’

Cha Jun Sung counted their heads. There are 20 guards. 20 cannibals left the entrance and looked for the noise. No more came out.

Wiing!

After a moment, the 2nd grenade went off. The cannibals that had gone running left changed their direction and went the opposite way. The entrance remained the same.

Cha Jun Sung's postulation had been correct. The cannibals on break did not care what was going on outside.

"Get on my back! We need to go inside!"

"Let me know your plans beforehand!"

Park Jin Hyuk frowned. Cha Jun Sung was saying they needed to go inside the cave without giving him time to get ready. His body was already getting on his back though.

Tak!

Cha Jun Sung and Park Jin Hyuk who descended as if falling infiltrated the cave. Their heart beat faster. They were experiencing fear and bliss at the same time.

Entry into the cave was linear. They could not turn around once they entered.

Papat!

"The path splits."

"That's blood."

Cha Jun Sung slid his finger along the blood on the ground. It was still wet. It must be that of the party members that had been dragged away by the cannibals.

"We're going down the middle."

"I think my heart is going to burst."

They chose the middle of the 3 paths. It would all be the same because they were all new places, but probability told them to go through the middle.

As they went further inside, the more it went from a dank cave to a military base. Nothing could be done about the waste of time, but the structure itself became more

complex.

“Since it’s a large place, let’s look for a place to hide first.”

“Sure.”

It was a place where 1500 soldiers used to work. If it had been created for daily life, there would have been a lot of separate spaces for rooms or warehouses.

They said it had become a lair for cannibals, but an empty place would come out if they searched for it.

Chapter 25

Drip drip.

Carlyle struggled to open his eyes at the sound of water dripping. As he was hanging upside down, his vision was upside down as well.

His brain started moving and trying to figure out what was happening like putting pieces of a puzzle together.

‘Ah...’

They had been following the cannibal when an electric net fell on them and he had been hit over the head a few times. He was surprised they were still alive.

He was caught up in his thoughts. Though he was only the second, he was of a noble aristocratic family. He was not someone who should be captured by mutants.

‘I don’t want to go on this mission.’

‘You have to go. Look at your brother and sister. Until when are you going to fall behind them?’

He recalled the conversation he had with his father, Duke Venter. He had been forced to come here when he did not want to.

He had been nervous. There were countless dangerous obstacles even in a 1500-point mission, but 3000? It was beyond his capabilities.

‘But my brother and sister are geniuses.’

‘You brat!’

His father had always been disappointed in him. Because his oldest son and daughter had the poise of nobility, but he did not?

However, Carlyle only thought this because he did not know. There is no child that a

parent does not love. No matter what, he was a son.

Duke Venter pushed Carlyle so that he might find his own calling. And he put Special Forces on him for his safety.

Duke Venter's true feelings were delivered incorrectly to Carlyle.

Carlyle lifted his head. As he was hanging, he did not see the ceiling but the floor.

There was a small puddle of blood. He had thought that water was dripping from somewhere, but it had been blood falling from a wound.

"Euk!"

"Keuk!"

After Carlyle, the party members slowly came to their senses one by one. Thankfully, no one had been beaten to death.

"Huh?"

"Ack!"

Hicks and Smith, who came to their senses, began to go mad. All of the party members reacted similarly. They were looking at hell.

Unidentifiable bundles of blood were hanging like they were.

There was a mix of those with hardened blood because they had been dead for a long time, those where the blood was still draining, and some that were still breathing weakly.

The mutants were using them for food. This was their meat locker.

Carlyle did not know this even though he was the first to wake up. There was no way he could know unless he had eyes on the back of his head.

"Pe, people...!"

"Lifers. They're Lifers!"

They killed mutants every day. Slaughtered meat did not scare them.

The party members were scared because of the human corpses hanging along with the mutants. To be precise, they were surprised that they were looking at Lifers like themselves.

The PDA on their wrists was the proof. The body Hicks was looking at did not have organs.

Their stomachs had been split opened. Looking closely, they did not have eyeballs and the parts with a lot of meat like the arms, butt, and thighs had been cut out.

Their eyes followed the blood that fell from the corpses. At the end, there were tools that could be found in a butcher shop and a cutting board as large as a table.

Shining blood, pieces of flesh and organs floating around.

It was grotesque just to look at, but they could not imagine going through it. Basically, humans were becoming meals for cannibals.

They each counted the number of corpses they could see from their positions. From what they could see, they counted 15 bodies.

“15...”

“How many parties have died? Hee hee! Is it 23 including us?”

Hicks mumbled madly. He wished he could go mad instead.

How could they maintain their sanity? All of their equipment had been taken while they were sleeping and all they had left were their PDAs and a set of tights.

It seemed they were just thinking of it as a skin to take off later. If the impact tights were easy to take off, they would have been naked already.

[You have confirmed the situation in Field of Meat. Please escape to the summons area.]

“Escape? Don’t be funny! I already gave up on this mission!”

“Me too!”

[You are in a state without freedom. You cannot exit the mission.]

“Shut up!”

“Send us back immediately!”

This was not a children’s playground. Reckless abandonment was not an option.

“How noisy. Be quiet unless you all want to be cooked.”

“Who?”

“Could it be a survivor?”

They heard an unfamiliar voice but could not find the direction because they were upside down. They did not have their translators, but they could understand. He was speaking in English.

“Your lives are at high risk as it is. Your lifespan will be shortened if you keep jabbering like that.”

“Hey! Where are you?”

“Are you on the side of the cannibals? Get us loose first!”

They had hope for their lives. They ignored the warning and grew louder.

If they could just be untied and reunited with their equipment, they could kill all of the mutants or escape this damned mission.

“We’ll do anything!”

“There’s no answer. I’m locked in here just like you guys are. How can I get you loose?”

“This asshole!”

Hicks shouted in anger. The meat warehouse rang to the point where everyone else’s voices were covered. That called in their misery.

Keurung!

A beast's growling that could not have come from a human – and the sound grew closer. A cold sweat dripped down the party members' spines.

"The chef is here. I mourn for whoever it will be."

His voice darkened. It was full of blame for their stupidity.

Bang!

As the crude steel doors opened, the chef that the survivor mentioned came in. An evil cannibal. It was fittingly fat for something that maintained the meat locker.

The party members froze like plaster. They just trembled as if they had malaria. The words that he mourned for one person kept turning in their heads.

There was no way not to understand what this meant unless they were stupid. 1 of the 8 people would be going into the chef's stomach.

The chef poked each person with its finger. Then he took the ropes tying their legs and pulled them up and down as if weighing them.

He looked at Hicks. The selection criteria was uncertain, but he had been chosen.

"It can't be!"

Bang!

The chef cut the rope holding Hicks and dragged him to the cutting board.

"I don't want to die!"

Hicks fervently moved his body, but it was no use. The party did not speak as if their mouths had been locked shut because they did not want to call the attention to themselves.

The chef placed Hicks on the cutting board. It pressed down on his chest so he could not move and brought the cleavers that had been lying in the corner down on his shoulder.

Kyak!

A fountain of blood spewed. The white of Hicks' eyes showed. It felt like thousands of ants were eating his skin. An indescribable pain.

The chef chewed on the arm whole. It ate ravenously. One arm must have been too little because it cut the other and ate it as well. Next was the legs.

Hicks died of a heart attack once his arms and legs were cut off. If he had survived that pain, he would have died from bleeding out or something worse.

The chef burped and put the corpse with just a head and torso in a large container. It was going to save it for later since it was full now.

Seuk.

Clang!

The chef went towards the party members, loosened the rope tying them up, paired them off, and locked them in pens fit for animals.

It had learned from experience that they would die if left hanging for too long.

Kwang!

The door closed and the chef left the meat locker. The party looked at the dead Hicks and realized that their turn would not be long.

"He won't come for another half day."

"Half day..."

"Keep in mind that 1 person always dies each time he comes. If we're unlucky, it's 2 people."

The meat locker was the chef's area, but the meat was shared by all of the cannibals. It could not keep all of the meat to itself when it thought of the other evil cannibals.

Seuk.

Lloyd turned his head in the direction of the voice.

The meat locker was dim. The shape was hazy, but the owner of the voice was sitting up not far away. He was also locked up.

“My name is Lloyd. Can we ask you to explain the situation?”

“Gladly.”

He was just waiting for the day he died. Explaining was nothing difficult.

Chapter 26

Kyak!

It was weak, but Cha Jun Sung heard it. His amplified hearing caught the sound of a person's scream.

It seemed one of the party members taken away by the cannibals had died. He felt bad for him but that was it. There was nothing that they could do for the party in the present.

"It's a scream."

"I didn't hear it... Can you tell where it is?"

"No."

He might have been able to locate it if it came out in a series, but it would be difficult to figure that out with one yell. He did get something out of it however. Thanks to the sound, he could tell the approximate direction.

The two of them waited in a storage room to observe the situation. Cannibals wandered around outside, but they did not come in.

This place held conventional weapons right before the disposal, so it was full of scrap metal or broken supplies. The residents before the cannibals, the soldiers, had put them in here.

Park Jin Hyuk's keen eye had discovered this place. Cannibals do not have a concept of cleaning. They thought that they had nothing to worry about as long as they did not do anything that would call attention to them.

Chichik!

"This... The walls must be so thick that the goggles can't function properly."

"How much of the energy is left?"

“24%.”

“I have 26%. We only have 4 charging kits. If we don’t save it, we won’t last for more than a few days.”

“6 hours per charging kit, 12 hours on power save mode, 24 to 48 hours at most since we have 4, so it’s 27 to 54 hours with the remaining energy.”

The 50m search range was drastically reduced because not only were they underground, but there were a lot of concrete and iron structures. It barely reached a fourth of its normal range.

Tak.

Cha Jun Sung took out his share of the 2 charging kits and handed them to Park Jin Hyuk. Park Jin Hyuk did not say anything and took them. He knew what it meant.

“Gather them.”

“Okay.”

Cha Jun Sung was a blader. He was an expert in melees, so he did not really need to use it. Instead of taking turns using it, it was better to give them all to the sniper.

“We can’t keep staying here... Should we kill them as we go or hide as we go?”

“There are pros and cons.”

“If we kill them as we go, we’ll reduce their numbers but we’ll be revealing our presence. If we hide as we go, we’ll avoid being seen but we’ll have to keep on alert.”

Park Jin Hyuk stroked his chin. He thought for a moment and hardened his expression.

“Let’s go bold.”

“Bold?”

“Lure them into a narrow passage where a surprise attack is impossible and kill everything that comes. Throw a grenade once too many come; we have plenty of supplies.”

10,000 only in bullets, they had packed dozens of different types of bombs including fever shots and grenades. They also had a few remote control claymores even if they had never used them before.

They had filled the space compression bag. If they had anything left over after the mission, they could use it later. It was better to be over prepared.

“I saw a place where we can do this on the way here. It’s close.”

Maybe because Park Jin Hyuk had gotten used to life in the underpass, he was first to identify other locations like places to hide or run away to.

He had memorized the path and characteristics of the structure while they were finding this storage room.

“Your role will be important.”

“I might be on top in terms of firepower, but it’s hollow without you, Jun Sung.”

The cannibals who could only attack in a straight line in a confined space, one shot of the powerful sniper rifle would go through 2 or 3 of them.

If there were too many for them to handle, they could clear it with one grenade at a time.

However, if they did not have Cha Jun Sung actively fighting on the forefront, they would not be able to focus on the fire support no matter how strong the attack was.

“Let’s go out.”

“Sure.”

Click!

Cha Jun Sung and Park Jin Hyuk checked their equipment and left the storage room. It is not something they would have been able to do in the open forest, but it would be possible here.



An arrow pierced the forehead of a cannibal turning in the alley. It died instantly. As the smell of the blood spread, more cannibals started gaining interest.

Cha Jun Sung took out the arrow. They could not underestimate the advantage of recycling.

12 died with one. They could kill hundreds if they came one at a time, but only as long as the situation arose.

Park Jin Hyuk laid on his stomach at the end of the alley with his eye to the scope. The sniper rifle did not shake because it was placed on top of the cradle.

They were done researching the area. It was a space so tight it was frustrating. There was a door behind Park Jin Hyuk, but it was storage full of useless material.

This entire area seemed to be designated to storage. Regardless, it was a good space for the them to face many. They would kill them as they saw them.

Kyak!

Pew!

As soon as a cannibal appeared, Park Jin Hyuk's sniper rifle fired before Cha Jun Sung's red fire did. His reaction was as good as a sniper's should be.

Pew pew!

Cha Jun Sung had nothing to do and observed. They died even if he left them alone. He was helping by staying out of the line of fire.

They did not dwell on the points. They were comrades who would share billions of points in the future. Sincere trust could not be traded for anything.

"Your aim is good."

"I'm not really aiming either."

It was the truth. He was not even moving the cradle. The cannibals were putting

themselves in the line of the scope. It was all thanks to the small space.

Papat!

“They’re coming.”

“Confirmed.”

The floor vibrated and the sound came. They could feel more than 100.

They came in hordes because none of them had returned from this place and there was the smell of gunpowder.

Cannibals remember the smell of gunpowder. Before Cha Jun Sung, they had suffered a lot of damages because of Lifers who tried to fight back before they were taken away.

Cha Jun Sung held up his red fire. There won’t be time to take his finger off the trigger. All that was left to do was to shoot until the battle was over.

It was obvious that they would try to overwhelm them with volume. Using the sword would not help.

They could be pushed back if they all came rushing in at the same time. Cha Jun Sung went to the front of the alley to slow them down as they rushed in.

“It’s bloody.”

Kyak!

The cannibals discovered Cha Jun Sung who had appeared suddenly, acted surprised, and glared. They stared at him.

Pew pew!

The red fire set to serial emptied its magazine. The forefront of the cannibals unexpectedly became meat shields for those in the back because they were pushed in.

Beep beep.

Cha Jun Sung hit the switch of the fever shot he set for 10 seconds and threw it above

the cannibals' heads. He could not see where it fell.

He made sure they could not get in with the red fire and counted 10 seconds with the clock on his PDA. With 2 seconds, he escaped to where Park Jin Hyuk was stationed.

Bam!

Kyak!

A fiery heat engulfed the cannibals. Because there was a destruction radius, the aftermath did not affect Cha Jun Sung who had turned the corner of the alley.

The destruction radius of the fever shot was 15m. If someone was even 1cm outside of this, he wouldn't suffer any damages. The compressed heat was released to that distance exactly.

"Come take a look. It's a spectacle."

"Where!"

Park Jin Hyuk put his sniper rifle down and ran over quickly. He was speechless at the devastation created by the fever shot. It had burned everything.

"It's no joke."

"I threw one and it's like that."

It did not kill all of the cannibals. 70%? The remaining 30% were not in good condition either.

The ones that had been burned badly were melted and staying alive with their bodies in half liquid state. There were only a few that were capable of movement.

"I'll be back there."

"Okay."

He ended their lives with the crossbow. It would take time for them to come rushing in again. He took care of the rest of the cannibals because he could not just sit around.

He recovered all of the arrows. Bullets are not infinite. He was thinking of saving them as much as possible. They would decrease if he used them without thought.

Cha Jun Sung took out the empty magazine. They had plenty of bullets, but only 9 magazines. It would be a problem if they ran out during battle. He needed to keep them filled up beforehand.

Kereung!

Cha Jun Sung was filling the magazine when he shifted his eyes to the side. There were suddenly a group of cannibals in numbers similar to the last group staring at him and drooling.

Tak.

The last bullet indicated a full magazine. The 30-bullet magazine was complete.

“Sorry.”

He was going to play them a song as an apology for keeping such important guests waiting. Prelude to Massacre with the guests’ screams set as the base.

Chapter 27

[TN: I hope you guys like blood! Because this novel has lots of it from what I've read so far :)]

"I'm going to throw up."

"I thought I'd gotten used to it, but I guess not as the degree gets more severe."

Cha Jun Sung and Park Jin Hyuk frowned as they looked at the cannibal corpses.

There was no full body. Even if they had died whole, they had been blown up by the fever shots and grenades.

The alley they are standing in was flooded with the cannibals' blood, flesh, bones, and guts. They felt sick as they looked at it.

The cannibals stopped approaching because they died every time they entered.

They had realized that they were at a disadvantage no matter what they did. They resented that the two had infiltrated their roost, but they did not have clear measures to take. All they could do was wait.

"They have learning ability."

"If it had been like the blood-sucking insects, they would have really showed us their numbers."

"How many did you kill?"

"Roughly 300? How about you?"

"Similar."

In theory, there was still a long way to annihilation. They could have expanded their numbers by breeding, but it was a Level E mission. It did not look like that would be the case.

“They act pretty smart. How do we catch them?”

“Don’t you think we can fool them into thinking we’re out of bullets if we act like it?”

“You think they’ll fall for it?”

“Seeing how they lured the party to put an electric net over them, it seems they have the ability to remember what they saw or learned, but they lack improvisation.”

They had suffered huge losses when they tried to push in with sheer numbers. If they really had intelligence comparable to that of humans, 600 of them would not have died.

Since they had witnessed the deaths of their kin, the methods they used until now would no longer work.

However, if they acted like they were out of bullets, they would think that there was no longer any threat and start fighting again.

“Shall we try it?”

“Show them your acting skills. Just keep in mind that I can’t act, so I can’t do it.”

Park Jin Hyuk pushed Cha Jun Sung and went back to his station. Cha Jun Sung needed to start acting suddenly. To cannibals.

Pew pew!

Kyak!

Cha Jun Sung randomly shot at the cannibals watching him. A program was unnecessary. They would be able to tell once he showed them the results.

Click!

“I don’t have bullets? Did I run out? I’m going to die now!”

Ugh!

Park Jin Hyuk squirmed in embarrassment. Cha Jun Sung pretended he did not see this and continued acting.

He locked the gun. Bullets did not come out no matter how many times he pulled the trigger.

One cannibal could not resist its curiosity and approached Cha Jun Sung. The others did not let their guards down and watched.

“Are you asking for a one-on-one match? I’m sure I’ll have to kill you without a gun to make them less suspicious?”

Cha Jun Sung brandished his sword. The pale blade appeared. He thought it might back down but it stayed put.

“Come on, you ugly thing.”

Kyak!

The cannibal expanded. It was moving that quickly.

Cha Jun Sung was calm. It was a narrow space. No matter how fast it was, it was in his palm. It would have been harder to face if it had been blindly strong.

Cha Jun Sung swung his sword at it as it aimed for his side. Its arm was slashed off and wriggled on the ground.

He took a small step back and jabbed with the sword held long. The cannibal held its neck and collapsed. As a hole formed, blood poured out and bubbled.

Kwajik.

Cha Jun Sung lifted his leg and stomped on its face. He was provoking the entire group. It must have been effective because they slowly crawled out.

Kung!

“You’re finally here. You guys need to die so the area we can act in expands.”

The cannibals made a path and 2 evil cannibals walked through.

They had killed 600, but none of them were evil cannibals. Fitting for their rank, they had been relaxing and only showed up because the situation had become serious.

Humans and mutants were the same in pushing off work to the subordinates.

‘2 of them.’

They need to kill the evil cannibals to make searching the military base more comfortable. He needed to cut off their heads. Even in war, killing thousands of soldiers was not as good as killing one general.

Cha Jun Sung took one step back at a time and the cannibals advanced that much each time. They had gained confidence from the appearance of their leaders.

“Get ready.”

“I’ve been ready.”

He started at the start of the curve and retreated to the end. It could be the last chance to wipe them out. He needed to fill the space as much as possible.

The evil cannibal’s muscle flexed. It was contemplating how it would rip him apart since it had him cornered. Cha Jun Sung had no intention of letting it go his way.

“Shoot.”

“Bang!”

Park Jin Hyuk’s sniper rifle could even penetrate a 2cm steel plate within 150m.

Fitting for a mighty force, it was not satisfied with taking one out and went through two or three at once. The cannibals panicked and tried to run, but it was no use.

Kwang!

Cha Jun Sung pressed the switch on the remote control. The first claymore he set up went off. To make matters worse for them, their exit was blocked.

Kya!

The evil cannibal pushed through the bullets raining down and came in. It honored its high level. They had expected it. He threw a sonic grenade at them.

Wiing!

Kwang!

The sonic grenade and 2nd claymore went off at the same time. The evil cannibal covered its ears and writhed in pain until it was shot in the head with the sniper rifle and fell over.

The cannibals were frantic and could not do anything. A lack of judgment when faced with devastation leads to death.

“Is it over?”

“Probably?”

The cannibals had become pieces of meat. The ones that had died from being shot had at least maintained their shapes. There were no trace of the ones that were killed by the claymore.

The two did not leave quickly, but checked their equipment. They also needed to rest. All they had done was shoot their guns, but that did not mean they were not tired.

They could not sense any more cannibals. They would see this as an entry to hell since even the evil cannibals had been killed.

“Let’s regain our strength and go.”

“Okay.”

They needed to maintain the best conditions to increase their chances at succeeding in the missions. If they went looking for the field of meat in this state, they would become exhausted within hours.

Looking for another place to rest was also labor.

They were sorry to do this when they thought of the captured party members who were waiting for their deaths, but many things held them back. Their own safety was

the priority.

Chapter 28

Campbell Brian was a Lifer from America. He had been accepted into Field of Meat with 9 comrades and came into the mission 26 days ago.

20 days passed since they had been captured and he was the only survivor. His party was the first to attempt Field of Meat.

Lloyd's team had thought that they would be the first, but they were wrong.

The world was large and there was a huge population. Talented Lifers all claimed that they were the best, but competition was fierce.

According to Campbell, 20 Lifers died in the meat locker instead of 15, and 9 people died outside while fighting the cannibals.

Though he lived, there were 30 people including himself – exactly 3 parties. Including Lloyd's party, 4 had fallen for the cannibals' trap.

"Are you saying that the cannibals learned while fighting with your party?"

"That's right. It must have been their first time battling with Lifers because we were dominant at first, but they became more cunning with time. That's how this happened."

They had not just been captured. They had taken a few hundred down with them.

"It seems they have the intellect of a 4 or 5 year old. You said that you were captured with an electric net? That's an item that the party before you had."

Campbell had spoken with the dying Lifers and found out the details of how they fought with the cannibals and how they were captured.

It was to help him survive. It was precious information that could not be traded for money.

"They were clumsy with the 2nd party, but the 3rd was different."

The 3rd party had been caught when they fell into a hole in the ground. Not all of them fell in but the outcome was obvious because their power had been divided.

“They become more intelligent as they fight, and we just happened to be the 4th party.”

“Why did they keep you alive? Not just for a day or two, but for dozens?”

Carlyle tossed a question sharply. Lifers were meat to cannibals. It was definite for them to eat him but to keep him alive? Something did not make sense.

“There are 2 things. Their intention is to dry me out slowly since I killed hundreds of their kin and I am helping them a little in order to stay alive.”

“Help?”

“If you stay alive, you will find out. It’s a bother to say anymore.”

Campbell changed the subject as though they would find out even if he did not tell them.

It could be that he did not want to tell them. It was a way to stay alive even for a little bit longer. The second he shared it, he would become useless to the cannibals.

Carlyle did not ask further either. In this state, he was going to end up being eaten by the cannibals. The only difference was in whether it would be faster or slower.

“Ke ke! Those guys are lucky. I’m sure they’ll have quit by now?”

Carlyle thought of Cha Jun Sung. He had resented them when they quit, but he was now envious. Had that not saved their lives?

“Who do you mean?”

“We also came in as a full party, but 2 people left because there was friction. I’m pretty sure they gave up and went back.”

“Those are some lucky people.”

“They’re outstanding Lifers. They’re the best that I’ve seen so far.”

“What makes you say that?”

“They have each spent more than 10,000 points on their equipment alone. It also looked like the one who seems to be the leader has gone through body modification.”

Campbell’s eyes widened with surprise. The more points someone accumulated meant that they had completed that many missions.

At that rate, it was appropriate to call him the best. Though it could not be reversed now, they would have been of great help if they had not left.

“Whew! What a waste. But what use is it since they’re not here?”

“That’s right.”

He could not help but wish they were there. If Cha Jun Sung or another party did not come in to save them, they would not last more than a few days.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

While they were waiting to die, they heard an explosion that shook the base. This kind of power had to have come from outside.

It was an explosion that could not be made with a gun, but with something like a claymore or grenade. Even a fever shot was far from a bomb because it was something that only let out heat.

“They didn’t leave? They infiltrated the base!”

“No way!”

“Can they make it alive? I don’t want to die like Hicks! We’re here! Save us!”

The color returned to Lloyd’s gloomy face.

The heavens had thrown them a lifeline. There was no way of knowing if that lifeline would be of use to them at the moment, but they would think about that later.

‘2 people came?’

Campbell's eyes narrowed. He had been conscious when dragged in, so he knew how dangerous it was outside. It was a problem from the entrance.

There were dozens of sentry guarding the entry. He guaranteed that if they killed those cannibals, they would raise an emergency and make the situation complication. They needed to lure the cannibals away if they wanted to move freely.

It was not 100% certain, but that was how Campbell had seen it.

Please!

Tsk tsk!

Campbell clucked his tongue at Smith and Jamie who were screaming.

Unlike Special Forces officers, they started Life Mission as regular people. He did not know of their skills, but they showed their weak mentality in extreme situations.

Lloyd's team was equally scared. The difference from Smith's team was that they did not want to become pathetic if there was nothing they could do, so they had just given up.

"It would be great if the luck you people are counting on reaches all the way here."

Campbell had never seen Cha Jun Sung, but he wanted him to come as soon as possible. As he said before, at least one person dies every half day.

Chapter 29

Pupuk!

Jiik!

Lloyd's party was giving up hope. It had been days and Cha Jun Sung had not found Field of Meat. In that time, Smith and Jamie died.

In the present, Japanese Kayamoto was being sliced like raw fish.

That did not mean they could give up all hope because they kept hearing explosions. They were sure that he was lost somewhere, unable to find the way.

Kwakwang!

Kyak!

The chef who had been eating Kayamoto's flesh punched the wall in anger and threw its tools anywhere.

It was much more violent today. With its eyes narrowed and nose flaring, it killed Kayamoto with more cruelty. It was angry.

Lloyd's team did not know, but the chef had come after fighting with the other evil cannibals. 10 evil cannibals had died at the hands of Cha Jun Sung.

There were only a few left. The chef was not happy even though it went up in ranking. He was being pressured to personally fight as he should in his position.

Evil cannibals were smarter than cannibals. The chef knew he would die if he went out there. His mutant instincts allowed him to predict the future.

Keureung.

The chef brought the wagon over and packed human meat. He put the meat of the freshly slaughtered Kayamoto in a large bucket.

He needed to use a bribe since he did not want to fight. Mutants like human or animal meat. It did not have impurities because it had not gone through a transition.

The meat of mutants infected with A virus was tough, so it did not taste as good. There was also toxicity in the blood.

Had Caicus of Closed Area not relished the taste of the paste he made of people? To mutants, humans were just one of many delicacies.

Ke ke!

The chef laughed in satisfaction and left the meat locker. He held the wagon and bucket tightly so as not to let even a drop fall.

They had shared a fair amount before but the meat supply had ended once Lloyd's party came in, so this amount should be convincing.

"Hah! Others died until now, but it'll be our turn starting tomorrow."

Whether by luck or coincidence, the 4 British people were left. The 4 American and Japanese people were sacrificed first. They could say it was fortunate, but even that luck was over.



"It was right around here."

"Let's look in each place."

Cha Jun Sung searched the base for a few days. It had not been at random.

Every half day, he heard screaming. He guessed the path with the sound, and he heard a scream just now as well.

The base was complex. Not only was it large, but it was dizzying because there were a lot of forked roads. It was like a maze because they are not used to the internal structure.

Seuseuk.

The two freely searched for the meat warehouse. Cannibals rarely appeared. They had killed close to 1000 of them.

Bump!

“Huh?”

“It’s close.”

It was dull. It was closer to the sound of something rolling along than the sound of a collision. It was getting closer. It was coming in their direction.

Cha Jun Sung took out his sword and red fire at the same time. Park Jin Hyuk also took out his crossbow and prepared for a surprise attack. They were used to fighting as they moved.

Kuk?

“Evil cannibal!”

“Look at the wagon it’s pushing! It’s full of human bodies!”

“Kayamoto?”

Cha Jun Sung’s eye went to the top of the bucket where a dead head had its tongue out. The expression was twisted in pain. It was Kayamoto.

“I’ll take care of it. Cover me.”

“Leave it to me.”

Park Jin Hyuk stepped back and made an environment for Cha Jun Sung to fight in.

Kung!

The chef was surprised. Of all the places to meet. There were no cannibals to call to. They were all gathered in one place because they could not split up.

“Did you kill all of those people?”

It was rhetorical. He was thinking to himself.

“The trail of blood is clear. Thanks. It’ll be easy to find because of you.”

Kyak!

Its flesh was so thick that the bullet could not completely penetrate the chef with the red fire’s power. It was wounded, but the shot was not fatal.

Cha Jun Sung shot near its eyes so it could not see.

The chef swung its arms. It was fairly strong. His bones could break with one hit. Park Jin Hyuk could even die.

“That’s not where I am.”

The sword slashed its leg. He cut with such force that the skin split open. It was extremely strong, but incredibly slow.

“Kuk!”

The chef threw the bucket at Cha Jun Sung. Kayamoto’s blood drenched him. There was a problem with his eyesight as it became red.

Pew!

Puk!

Park Jin Hyuk’s bullet went through the chef’s eye and to the brain.

The chef took a few steps and could not handle the heavy weight, collapsing. It was dangerous. If Park Jin Hyuk had been late in shooting, Cha Jun Sung would have been hit.

“That’s disgusting. How is he going to throw that?”

“Ugh, the smell!”

Cha Jun Sung took out a bottle of water from the space compression bag and poured it all. The water washed the blood away as it poured out but it did not get rid of the

smell.

It was their drinking water, but he did not think it a waste. They could get more water in the base. They must have been using the underground water, because water came out in different places.

They were suspicious of the water, so they used a cleaning agent to purify it.

After pouring 2 bottles, much of the sticky feeling was gone. He left what was on the plastic armor and impact tights.

“Let’s go.”

“It’s right in front of us.”

As they followed the tire tracks, an ominous iron door appeared. There was so much blood hardened on it that it could not be cleaned. Especially on the handle.

“If this is the right place, all that’s left is the escape?”

“Escaping is easy. We can just go back the way we came when we killed everything.”

Creak.

The hinges creaked as the door opened. It stuck because it had not been oiled.

“I was right, right? I had a feeling it would be a meat warehouse.”

“Ah...”

Park Jin Hyuk had thought that the description of hanging was only fitting for fruit trees. Starting today, he would need to change the way he thinks.

“Do you think all of those people were Lifers?”

“The likelihood is high. There must have been people who were faster than we were.”

“Telling us to check the Field of Meat meant to confirm their deaths.”

There were two types of Lifers to enter this meat house – those who were captured

and those who infiltrated. The goal of this mission was to infiltrate it with their skill.

It meant that they needed to get past this much to be able to advance into Level D.

[You have confirmed the situation in Field of Meat. Please escape to the summons area.]

They can escape now that they had seen it. They pushed it back because they could do that at any time. Cha Jun Sung had something to do here. He looked for survivors.

“Mi, Mister Cha?”

“You were alive?”

“Oh! Thank God! Thank you!”

Cha Jun Sung went into the meat warehouse and found Lloyd locked in a pen. He looked overcome with emotion upon seeing his savior.

He had become emaciated while going back and forth between heaven and hell over the past few days.

‘That one’s not dead.’

‘I’ll say.’

Park Jin Hyuk looked at Carlyle with displeasure. The rude asshole had a lot of luck. He had not wanted him to die, but that was just his thinking.

Cha Jun Sung moved to rescue them. He would need to let them go first.

[You have discovered survivors. Activating a conjunction special mission.] [Level E Special Mission: Rescue Survivors] [Goal: Attainment] [Scenario: Rescue the Lifers locked up in Field of Meat] [Reward: 1000 points per person]

Conjunction special mission? Cha Jun Sung and Park Jin Hyuk looked at each other.

By choice or force, there were special missions by association.

This case was forced, but it felt like a bonus because it had been activated while they

were rescuing them already. They would always welcome this kind of mission.

Tatang!

Cha Jun Sung and Park Jin Hyuk shot at the locks on the pens and broke them. The party was freed. They all seemed to be fine.

[You have earned 1000 points.] [You have earned 1000 points.]

As Cha Jun Sung and Park Jin Hyuk released Lloyd and Carlyle, Henry and Martin, they each received 4000 points. They were free points that they had not expected.

“We don’t have the translator anymore because they took our helmets. We can’t understand Korean, but I’m sure you’re able to understand me?”

“Yes.”

The translator installed in the PDA allowed them to listen to what others were saying in the desired language through the helmet, so the function was halted without the helmet.

Speaking was of the same principle. He needed to be fluent in English to talk to Lloyd. He was at least able to understand Lloyd because of the translator.

“Please save him as well.”

“Who?”

Cha Jun Sung followed Lloyd’s finger and saw Campbell locked in the corner. A new face, he was not a member of the party he entered with.

“He’s a survivor from the first party.”

“The first party?”

He moved as he asked. It was 1000 points just for letting him out.

Even without the points, he was a Lifer with the cannibal as a common enemy. In a situation where rescuing was possible, it was not right to leave him there.

“So...”

Lloyd explained what he heard from Campbell on behalf of the party. It was easy to understand because he left out the guesswork and only relayed the main points.

“Thank you. My name is Campbell Brian.”

“No problem.”

Campbell did not have a translator either. Cha Jun Sung could hear, but was disappointed that he could not communicate. Park Jin Hyuk kept his mouth shut as well.

“Your equipment is as impressive as I’ve been told. You did body modification as well?”

“Yes, yes.”

One person spoke and one person listened – it was a one-way conversation. He thought he was going to start sweating. Park Jin Hyuk was the one who saved him in a dangerous situation.

“Jun Sung, annihilation? Escape?”

“Hm, annihilation?”

“What do we do with those people? They’ll die on the way out without their equipment.”

Cha Jun Sung wanted to end the cannibals instead of escaping right away. There was no guarantee that everything would go as well as it did today once they entered the top mission in Level E.

If they left Lloyd’s team however, they would lose the lives they had saved.

“I guess so.”

“Let’s think about it after we get those people to the summons area.”

It made sense. They had plenty of time. 3 or 4 hours was enough to get to the summons area from the meat warehouse. They could decide after sending these people.

“We don’t have weaponry, but the things that aren’t dangerous are over there.”

Different types of protective gear were in the area that Campbell pointed out.

There were items for dozens of people. Armor was like a shell that cannibals could not eat. It looked like they dumped it all here because they had no use for it.

Lloyd’s team went through the equipment. All they had to do was find the identification number that indicated it was theirs.

It included the helmets that would activate the PDA’s translating function.

“Where are the weapons?”

“I don’t know, but I saw them take them to a location in the 2nd forked path to the meat warehouse.”

Campbell searched his memories. He was not positive it was really a storage room for weaponry.

“We’ll go and come back. Use this to protect yourself until we come back.”

Cha Jun Sung handed the automatic crossbow to Lloyd. They would kill any cannibals they saw on the way, but it was just in case.

Chapter 30

The place Campbell directed them to was where the Lifers' weapons were held. Pistols, SMGs, crossbows, and bows – there was a motley of weapons.

“There are a lot of good weapons.”

“Let's pack the supplies. We deserve this much after what we suffered.”

Cha Jun Sung separated the weapons to give to Lloyd's group. It would be convenient to put them in the packs, but the cannibals had ripped them all apart so none of them were very useful.

The space compression bag was already full of the loot. If they took these weapons back with them to sell, they would make enough money to each buy a car.

“But.”

“Huh?”

“Why don't the cannibals use the guns and bombs when they use the electric net?”

Guns and bombs. Once they are unlocked, these were items that make the user into Rambo. In some ways, the electric net was harder to use than these.

If the cannibals had faced Cha Jun Sung and Park Jin Hyuk in an armed state, they would have died, been captured, or run away.

“If I were the leader here, I would be totally against the subordinates using these weapons.”

“Why?”

“Because they might stab me in the back.”

With a gun, a cannibal could easily kill an evil cannibal. If they do not control it, the order can be overturned and the law could become a mess.

“When you say it like that, it makes sense.”

“Let’s go.”

Cha Jun Sung put the weapons in the least torn pack and went back to Lloyd’s group.

He gave each person an SMG with a couple hundred bullets, and a few grenades. Everyone took it without complaint except for one person.

“This is it for weapons?”

“No.”

Carlyle asked the whereabouts of the weapons. There had to be more than dozens of weapons because that many Lifers had died. Cha Jun Sung spoke honestly.

“I packed the rest of them.”

“What did you say?”

“Be thankful I’m giving you that much. I could have left you here.”

Carlyle felt shame at Cha Jun Sung’s words. It sounded like he was saying, ‘What have you done that you’re claiming weapons?’

“Mister Cha, let’s stop.”

“Are we leaving right away?”

“Let’s get out since there’s no good in staying in this terrible place.”

As soon as they made their decision, everything went according to plan. They got out of the base within 2 hours through the path that Cha Jun Sung had memorized.

The strange thing was that they were never attacked while they were leaving.

Are they hiding themselves because they are scared of being annihilated? It could be. Even if they were angry, it is another way to conserve their species.

Kiik!

He was mistaken however. There was no reason for them to let them go easily in the first place.

Jiing!

As soon as they got outside, the vision goggles returned to their original search range. At the same time, the cannibals' heat was captured en masse.

"Jin Hyuk, put the crossbow away and take out your sniper rifle. They're too close."

"Damn!"

Park Jin Hyuk held his rifle. He knew they were letting them go too easily. They had known that they were at a disadvantage in a narrow area and had brought them to an open space.

"Are we under siege?"

"It should be about 300 of them. I think we'll have to go as we kill them."

He could sense the cannibals' movement clearly. They were watching Cha Jun Sung's group from just 40m away. These cunning creatures must be waiting for them to enter the forest.

'5 big ones... 1 bigger one, that's the leader.'

It was not Level 3.

The balance would be destroyed if it were Level 3. The cannibal itself was a strong mutant, so he estimated it to be a high Level 2. It was impossible to face one-on-one without a gun.

Seuk.

Cha Jun Sung moved around and searched with his bow. The cannibals did not intend to let him go and blocked each path.

They needed to somehow lure the cannibals elsewhere if they wanted to get to the

summons area. This was their home ground, so the party members were at a disadvantage.

“They’re trying to fight intellectually with people? Let’s see who wins.”

“Do you have a plan?”

“If we just barge in, they’ll kill half of us at least. We’ll have to play with them.”

Cha Jun Sung resisted saying, ‘Though we probably won’t die.’ He had the confidence to protect Park Jin Hyuk no matter what.

“It’s about 36 to 49m.”

He measured the distance. The closer cannibals were 36m away, the farther ones at 49m. They were exact figures. They were farther away the stronger they were and it did not get closer than that.

“Please give me the fever shots.”

“How many?”

“All of them!”

Cha Jun Sung himself had 5, Park Jin Hyuk had 6, and Lloyd’s group each had one. Once everyone handed them over, they had a total of 16.

Cha Jun Sung threw them into the forest without even setting the timer.

36 to 49m, the fever shot weighed 1kg. It was impossible to throw this heavy weight over 36m.

“Huk!”

“What are you doing!”

“Mister Cha!”

Lloyd’s team yelled. Fever shots were important bombs because they are capable of mass destruction. He had thrown something like that as if it were a rock without

setting the timer.

Kyak kyak!

The cannibals ran from their spots as they saw the fever shots fly toward them. The ones that knew of its danger led the ones that did not know out of range.

At that, the distance between them and the cannibals became even larger. Now, they could not be detected by the goggle's 50m range.

"You can detect the fever shot with the goggles, right?"

"I can just shoot it and set it off, right?"

"You're smart."

Hee hee!

There was a limit to adjusting the timer. He would not have been able to cause much damage if he had thrown it after setting the timer. But if he threw it as is? It would not go off.

"Since they're so suspicious, they'll wait for a bit before going back to their places."

Cannibals do not have a concept of misfires. They can only differentiate between something that goes off and something that does not. They will go back into formation if they know that it does not go off.

Lloyd clucked his tongue. This operation was possible because they had vision goggles.

Shyashyak!

Cha Jun Sung smiled. The situation was unfolding as expected. The cannibals who released their suspicion after 30 minutes went back to their positions at 40m.

"See. No matter how smart they are, they're smart for that level, not smart enough to win against humans."

"Relatively?"

“Yeah.”

Cannibals were perceived to be smart because they were in comparison to mutants. Lifers were fooled by them because they perceived the cannibals to be on a similar level.

If they had fought with the thought that they were on the same level, they might have been pushed back by sheer numbers but they would not have died pathetically in the meat warehouse.

Does it make sense? It is not even the primeval ages and they fall into a hole, or that they try to set a trap but instead are trapped under an electric net?

“The range of the fever shot is 15m, so there will be a series of explosions even if one goes off.”

“Will it be able to kill all of them?”

“They’re such fast creatures that they’ll reflexively get out as soon as it goes off.”

Annihilation was ambitious. Looking at the way they were spread out, 50% would not be able to escape and would burn to death. It was obvious that they would be on their highest guard.

For the rest, they would have to use all their tricks whether it was to shoot or beat them to death. It was a pity that they would not fall for the same methods.

“Which one should I shoot?”

“The one furthest.”

“The one all the way at the end? There are a lot of obstacles along the way, let’s see if I can get through all of them.”

Park Jin Hyuk aimed his rifle at the fever shot Cha Jun Sung had indicated.

There were a few trees blocking the path to it. He was not sure the bullet would be able to go through because they were fairly thick, but he did not linger on it for too long.

“If it doesn’t work with one shot, it’ll go with two or three.”

“That’s the spirit.”

Pew!

The bullet cut through the air. It went through the trees and looked like it was going to reach the fever shot as it rotated violently, but it lost power and stopped.

Pew!

As heat formed where the bullet had passed, the target he needed to match was marked. He fired again and went through the hole that had been formed before.

It pushed the bullet that was stuck out and cleared the rest of the obstacles.

Puk.

Kwang!

It finally hit the fever shot. The heat called its fellows.

Kwakwakwakwa!

The 16 fever shots exploded in a row. The 15m range expanded by 5 or 6 times in seconds. It was like a missile.

Kyak!

It worked. The cannibals were swept by the blast and ran around frantically. It was unsure whether it was the forest or the cannibals burning.

Kung!

The leader was furious. The surviving cannibals gathered at its roar and charged at Cha Jun Sung’s group. They had given up on psychological warfare.

Tutu!

Lloyd’s team each aimed and killed one. Carlyle also attacked once in a while, but he

was scared of the cannibals and busy hiding.

Kwakwang!

When a grenade went off, 4 cannibals ripped into pieces. It was the last stage. They needed to mobilize the last of their power and complete the mission.

“We can’t last! We need to get out!”

“Follow me!”

Cha Jun Sung led the way. There were much more survivors than those that had died from the fever shots. It was dangerous to remain in this spot. They needed to move.

Kuk!

Cannibals charged at them from all directions. They built momentum. They did not guard their lives because of the leader’s orders. It was the suicide squad.

Sukuk!

Tatang!

He shot his gun to clear a path. Everyone fought desperately but as the cannibals became more vigorous, Carlyle became more unstable.

“We need to follow Mr. Cha!”

“It’s too much! There are too many cannibals closing in and the forest is on fire!”

“Sir!”

Carlyle blocked his ears. Cha Jun Sung was leaving all of the paths and choosing the one with the highest probability for them to die. He could not find the motivation to follow him.

“Let’s take the path on the side! Look at it. The cannibals are following him!”

The majority of the cannibals chased Cha Jun Sung. They knew exactly who had killed all of their kin. He had killed more than 1000, so they could not forget him.

“Mister Cha saved us!”

“Shut up!”

Tatak!

Carlyle left the group and went through the path on the side. Lloyd’s group was a team of Special Forces meant to protect him. They had no choice but to follow him.

Seuk.

Campbell who had been looking on as a third party looked over at Carlyle.

A pathetic expression on a spoiled brat who was selfish when assessing a situation. His traits made him perfect for an unnecessary death.

Cha Jun Sung was taking an off-road even though it would be more difficult because he knew the path and it would take the least time to reach the summons area.

This was the cannibals’ hometown. If they got lost even for a moment in another path, they would be captured without being able to do anything. They needed to be swift if they wanted to live.

Papat!

Campbell needed to choose between Cha Jun Sung and Lloyd’s group, and chose the latter. He was already far from Cha Jun Sung and it was too burdensome to follow him alone.

“Ho ho! 4 people is better than 2 and weaker is better than the stronger.”

Campbell turned to the side. With this, the party split into two.

Chapter 31

Papapapat!

Cha Jun Sung and Park Jin Hyuk ran. They looked back when they could to shoot and throw grenades. Each time, one or two cannibals always died.

“I did as much as I could.”

“Agreed!”

Lloyd’s group did not follow them. They had set everything up for them with difficulty and all they had to do was take it, but he could not take care of that for them as well.

It seemed the man they met in the meat locker, Campbell, had also followed Lloyd. Had they formed a friendship in the few days they spent together?

“They’re persistent!”

“Jump into the ocean once we reach the summons area.”

“The ocean?”

“If they follow us in, today’s the day they die.”

If they had taken the right path, the cliff they were first summoned to would appear.

It was 20 to 25m high.

Even if they fell into the ocean, the absorptivity of their equipment would reduce the friction.

The end of the forest was coming. They could hear the sound of waves nearby. Cha Jun Sung took out a grenade and pulled the pin. Park Jin Hyuk followed suit.

“Put the grenade on the ground and run!”

“Ack!”

Pat!

The grenade fell to the ground. It would go off in 5 seconds. Park Jin Hyuk made a fuss and jumped into the ocean. The cannibals filled the area behind them.

They were similar in speed to Cha Jun Sung, but the distance closed in as they ran. There was the problem of stamina as well, so it would have been a problem if it had been a long distance.

Kwang!

The grenades exploded and fragments flew out. It swept the cannibals that had gathered and they collapsed. But it was not over. There were still some standing.

Kung!

When the explosion disappeared, the evil cannibals and dozens of cannibals threw themselves into the ocean. They were determined to kill Cha Jun Sung at the very least.

“I prepared this for you.”

“Kung!”

Cha Jun Sung threw the grenade in his hand. The cannibals opened their eyes wide. They were falling in open space. Unless they could fly away like birds, there was no way to avoid it.

Kwang!

The shockwaves of the grenade hit Cha Jun Sung and Park Jin Hyuk’s bodies. Fragments came flying at them, but their plastic armor and impact tights absorbed it.

Splash!

Still it was early to think that they were safe because they had fallen in the water. The cannibals that had survived the blast were swimming towards the two. It was a

complete horror.

Tutututu!

The cannibals were not used to swimming and there was a notable difference in the way they moved in comparison to the way they moved on land. This made it easier to shoot them.

In their submerged state, they made the approaching cannibals into fish food.

“Let’s end this, it’s a drag.”

“My thoughts exactly!”

If the difficulty of Level E was this high, nothing needed to be said about Level D. Level D would be uncertain even after acquiring the best gear and going through the 2nd stage of body modification.

The number of cannibals gradually decreased and they eventually killed all of them off.

“Is that the end?”

“Could be?”

“There aren’t anymore.”

“Wow!”

Park Jin Hyuk put his hands in the air and cheered. Their attack on the cannibals was over. Then they heard the words they wanted to hear so much.

-[Congratulations. You have cleared Level E upgrade mission, Field of Meat.]

-[You have earned 3000 points, and Level D mission and store are open.]

Park Jin Hyuk was delighted at the fact that the Level D mission and store had been unlocked. Cha Jun Sung did not hear the last words because he had already unlocked them.

-[Please go to shore to return to the briefing room or reality.]

“Let’s find a low place.”

Cha Jun Sung looked at the cliff slopes and shook his head. They could not climb it.

But they both knew how to swim. They swam and rested by floating when they were too tired. After swimming like this for 20 minutes, they came to a beautiful waterfront.

Park Jin Hyuk put all of the weaponry into the space compression bag and held only the sniper rifle. It was the best weapon against a surprise attack.

“Now that we’ve finished, it’s a bother to annihilate them.”

“Should we go back?”

The purpose of Field of Meat was not annihilation. There could be cannibals remaining on the base, but he did not want to continue fighting.

“Let’s follow the waterfront. We might find Lloyd and his men.”

“Okay.”

Their shoulders were heavy. They were exhausted and as their tension relaxed, the fatigue spread. However, he did wonder what happened to Lloyd and the others.

There was nothing they could do if they had died in the forest, but they might run into them if they had made it out.

“There!”

“I saw.”

They could see what they estimated to be 40 to 50 dead bodies. It could not be people. It had to be cannibals. It seemed there had been a great battle.

Among the cannibal corpses, there were the bodies of Lloyd, Henry, and Martin.

They had died in a gruesome way. It looked like they had fought back until the end and were hacked up. Could it be that they thought it unfair that they died? There was anger

in their widely open eyes.

Cha Jun Sung touched Lloyd's body. It was still warm but some time must have passed since his death because it was starting to cool. This was the same for Henry and Martin.

"What about Carlyle and Campbell?"

"Do you think these three died while opening up a path for them?"

"Could be."

Cha Jun Sung walked away from the bodies. They could make money by selling their gear, but he did not need it and did not really want to do it.

They found Carlyle's body not far from Lloyd and the others. He had his face down in the sands.

"They opened up the path for him for nothing."

"Tsk!"

Park Jin Hyuk had a bitter look. He did not like the man, but he had never wished for his death. He just did not like him, it was nothing more and nothing less.

Cha Jun Sung felt something strange while examining Carlyle's body.

"What are you doing?"

"The cause of death is unclear. Other than his blue face, there isn't any wound."

"What about it?"

"There isn't a cannibal's body nearby and he's dead alone."

He looked for a mortal wound to figure out Carlyle's cause of death, but he was perfectly fine. Other than his blue face, there was nothing that could have killed him.

"I think he suffocated."

“Suffocated?”

“They say when someone suffocates, their face turns blue. I saw in on TV.”

Cha Jun Sung thought that Park Jin Hyuk’s explanation made sense.

“Fight against me.”

“What? Kuk!”

Cha Jun Sung went behind Park Jin Hyuk, put his head in a headlock, and squeezed.

Park Jin Hyuk flailed. The impact tights expanded and pushed against Cha Jun Sung’s strength, but it was loose. He had discovered a new vulnerability.

“Ow... My neck.”

“What do you think?”

“I think suffocation is right. The impact tights don’t function against it.”

“But there was a repelling force.”

“You have a lot of muscular strength because you went through body modification. How could I withstand it?”

It sounded like the impact tights would have been able to protect him if he had not gone through body modification. A cannibal would not have done something so onerous.

“Campbell...”

“Are you saying he went through body modification and is the one who killed Carlyle?”

“In context.”

The only other survivor in this mission was Campbell. It could not help but raise suspicion. It would be a PK if it were a game, but it was murder since it was reality.

“That guy completed a Level D mission and opened the store!”

“Since I’m not the only one who’s special.”

“Why do you think he did it?”

“The reason why he did a PK? There’s a different pleasure in killing users than in killing mutants. Or he’s doing it to gain experience.”

“But this is reality. What experience? He’s psycho.”

“Point.”

“Huh?”

“Do you think he can take another Lifer’s points if he kills them?”

It was not information that was recorded in Lifer World. Of course opinions were divided. Would they be rewarded points even if they killed Lifers? Was there someone who had killed before?

“I’m sure there are a lot. A ton.”

There was no way murderers did not exist in this crazy world. If they were given points? They would tell people not to share the information in the greed of wanting to take all the points.

“Kill someone to confirm?”

“Probably.”

“If you find Campbell?”

“I’ll probably kill him if it’s possible, but I have no intention of going out of my way. Let’s look and decide.”

As he continued with Life Mission, there would be a day when he killed a human and not a mutant with these hands, wouldn’t there? The only difference was whether that day would come sooner or later.

“He’ll be close by.”

“How do you know?”

“Lloyd’s body was cold, but this one is warm. He’s close.”

Cha Jun Sung lifted his head. They needed to go to the summon area if they wanted to complete the mission. Campbell would be heading towards the summon area as well.

Chapter 32

Park Jin Hyuk held his sniper rifle and walked toward the waterfront.

It was impossible to go into the forest and create an ambush. They could also be attacked if a cannibal were alive. Cha Jun Sung thought the same.

In a position where they were on a quiet chase, they could not take that kind of risk.

Seuseuk.

The two who had been walking as though running, lowered their bodies. They had found Campbell.

“Shoot?”

“We can’t shoot without talking to him. We need to be sure he’s the killer.”

The context pointed to Campbell, but what if it wasn’t him? Blindly shooting him was not something someone in their right mind could do.

“I’m going. You stay here and aim. Pull the trigger if I send the signal.”

“Be careful.”

Cha Jun Sung approached Campbell. He left some distance between them and made his presence known. If his senses had been amplified with body modification, he would already know anyway.

“Campbell.”

“Huh?”

Campbell reacted to the voice and turned around. His shaking eyes – Cha Jun Sung did not miss this change like an eagle watching its prey.

“Mister Cha? You hadn’t gone back?”

“Carlyle.”

“Carlyle?”

“He died. I’m assuming you won’t give the excuse that a cannibal killed him?”

“I want to say, ‘I didn’t kill him!’ but the situation won’t let me. That’s right. I took more care in killing him, but I guess I got caught.”

Campbell put on an expression of discomfort. This was a scenario he had not expected.

He had procrastinated thinking that Cha Jun Sung had already gone back. He had given his back to him while he had peace of mind. It was surprising, but he was unfazed.

“Are points the goal?”

“About half?”

“What is the other half?”

“Points are the main reason, but killing is also fun.”

Kik kik!

His mask was coming off.

Cha Jun Sung realized that he was facing a psychopath.

“Aren’t you curious as to how many points you’re given when you kill a Lifer?”

He was curious. If all of the deceased’s points were passed over, a war could arise among Lifers. It would be more rewarding than hunting mutants.

“They give you 10%. I earned about 5000 points after killing 4 people.”

Cha Jun Sung needed to get through a 1500-point mission. He could earn that easily by killing just a few Lifers. He could see how it would be addictive.

“Did you kill Lloyd and his men as well?”

“They were mortally wounded while trying to save Carlyle. I am the one who killed them, but I guess it would be right to say that they pulled it ahead of schedule.”

This is why he had not found traces of Campbell on Lloyd and his men.

“You have an impressive eye. It’s a good thing I didn’t follow you back there.”

If he had followed Cha Jun Sung, not only would he not have been able to kill him, but he might have died himself.

“Let me ask you. Is what you said the truth? What about the party you came with?”

“I killed everyone because they tried to quit when they found out it was impossible to complete the mission. I was captured because I was unlucky. Thank you, Mister Cha. You saved me.”

This much was the truth. If Cha Jun Sung had not saved him, he would have died 100%.

“Everything is true except that?”

“There’s no reason to hide the rest is there?”

“How did you stay alive?”

“The cannibals... They’re stupid but maybe they felt a certain level of kinship with their own?”

Campbell annihilated his party and killed hundreds of cannibals. The smell of blood spread all throughout the island because he had been unable to clean up the battlefield.

This had called the cannibals to him. He fought back because he could not die so pathetically, but he could not handle the numbers that swarmed to him.

The funny thing was that the cannibals had locked him in a pen and killed Lifers in front of him. They had wanted him to experience the pain of watching his kin die.

They did not want to starve him to death, so they had thrown him the provisions that Lifers brought in with them.

“I even pretended to be surprised sometimes because I thought they might kill me if I didn’t care. And... I told them how to use the electric net.”

After he had spent a few days in the pen, the evil cannibals came looking for him.

They brought a few items that had bothered them and motioned something with their hands and feet. What could it be? They were asking how to use them.

They put the dangerous firearms in storage and started using the items for capture and camouflage in hunting Lifers because all they had to do was press a button.

Campbell had felt some pleasure in watching this because it was like watching a play. This was why he had not been bored even though he had been locked up for weeks.

Guilt? He didn’t have anything like that. If it was to stay alive, he could kill thousands of people without blinking. Look at him. Hadn’t he survived?



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